

UNLEASHING ISRAEL ■ WAR PUNDIT AMNESIA ■ KAGAN'S MYTH

JANUARY 15, 2007

The American Conservative

FRAGMENTED FUTURE

Diversity Without Community



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VARIETY PACK

I want to thank your editorial staff for the wonderful assortment of readers' letters printed in the Dec. 4 issue. Your Forum reveals not only a broad and diverse audience, but also a marvelous commitment to candor and fairness.

My own politics have tended "left-of-center" for the past 25 years, and my subscriptions include some rather "progressive-lefty" material. But when I want to read the thoughts of educated people devoted to promoting and preserving the common good in America, *TAC* sometimes provokes me but seldom lets me down.

My subscription to *TAC* is in its third year, and I still delight in reading and sharing with my friends the latest and best of "American Conservative" thought. I hope your magazine prospers. Thankfully,
DAN TREECRAFT
Spokane, Wash.

CORPORATE CULPRITS

In response to "Return of the Native" (Dec.4), a flood of questions come to mind, the first being why aren't we focusing on the corporations who hire cheap, unskilled labor? After all, aren't they the source of working- and middle-class woes? Why pit Joe Sixpack against Javier Sixpack when both seek the same thing: a better life for themselves and their children? We have to ask ourselves what causes immigrants to want to come here.

Who's holding the carrot of unskilled, low-paying jobs? Whose policies have kept the Third World a place from which immigrants want to flee? (I thought NAFTA was supposed to change that.) Can anyone blame immigrants for wanting to get into our country? If I had to break the law in order to feed my family, I would do so.

In this important debate, let's focus on the real culprit: the corporate execs

offering the carrot of limited opportunity to immigrants and the stick of unemployment and lower wages to Joe Sixpack.

JAMES REDDEN JR.
via e-mail

GUNBOAT THEOLOGY

I really appreciated Daniel Larison's article in the Nov. 20 issue of *The American Conservative*. As a Christian, I have often been very disturbed by how cert-politicians and activists hijack the faith to serve an agenda that God has not mandated in Scripture.

To be sure, God ultimately desires humanity to live free of oppression and to experience the fulfillment of its potential in the Creator and Redeemer. However, many of us have long understood that God's ultimate will and His temporal will are not always the same thing. God does not want people starving, for example. But as Larison rightly points out, "If Bush speaks of God giving men universal freedom, he might as well say that God has given man universal bread or universal world peace, while tacitly ignoring hunger and war." On the other hand (though I do not hide my light under a Bush-el), one might try to argue that since God commands His people to aid the poor, they should liberate the oppressed as well. But food for the hungry does not exactly parallel bullets for the abused.

Since I believe staunchly in the power of the Gospel to save souls and transform the way people live in this fallen age, I loathe the merging of Christianity with a political agenda. That alone is enough to make me wish Bush would not give the impression that it's "God's will" for the U.S. to invade other countries. That mentality works against the advance of the true Gospel because it turns people off by prompting them to confuse the supernatural Gospel with human ideology.

Secondly, I believe the New Testament teaches (primarily in Romans 13) that God's main purpose for secular governance is the maintaining of law and order, not some Western version of *jihad*. It seems to me that wherever the New Testament ideal for secular government is maintained—whether or not participants are conscious of the New Testament is immaterial—there we find the greatest liberty for citizens. But the irony in such ideologies as Bush's exporting of democracy is that force and coercion—the opposite of liberty—become the realities of the countries invaded.

I am not opposed to all wars of liberation or to all possible occasions of military intervention—such classic cases as Nazi-occupied Europe and genocide-plagued Rwanda come to mind—but Larison is correct that God has never told Bush or any other politician that foreign countries must be invaded for the sake of exporting democracy. If the people of other societies don't seem motivated enough to overthrow their respective Talibans, ought we necessarily do it for them? If the populace in general continues to embrace an irrational worldview that militates against liberty, should we try to force upon them a liberty that rightly hangs on a different worldview?

Instead, people living in societies where personal liberty is the norm should be exporting ideas, not impositions; mind, not muscle.

ANDY DERKSEN
Vancouver, Canada

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PHOTOGRAPHER SHOWCASE

[COVER]

Fragmented Future

BY STEVE SAILER Diversity creates variety—but not neighborhoods. Page 7

[STRATEGY]

Osirak Redux?

BY LEON HADAR Prime Minister Ehud Olmert came to Washington seeking a green light for an Israeli strike on Iran. He wasn't completely disappointed. Page 11

[POLITICS]

Newt's Comeback Tour

BY W. JAMES ANTLE III The former speaker says he isn't running for president, but he hopes to feel a draft. Page 14

[MEDIA]

Selective Amnesia

BY GLENN GREENWALD Being a pro-war pundit means never having to say you're wrong. Page 20

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS

COLUMNS

6 Patrick J. Buchanan: In Defense of Underrated Presidents

35 Taki: Mr. Webb Goes to Washington

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: The Baker Boys Report Back; Big Apple Not Rotting; Multiculturalism on the Menu

21 Deep Background: Who Clued in Khan?; \$40 Million Per Terrorist; Grandma, AIPAC Is on the Phone

ARTICLES

16 Ivan Eland: How to fund a war without telling

18 Paul Moreland: Give us your tired, your poor, your gangbangers.

23 Geoffrey Wheatcroft: Tony Blair staked his career on the Iraq War—and lost.

25 Claes G. Ryn: How the Right won elections but lost the culture

ARTS & LETTERS

28 Steve Sailer: Emilio Estevez's "Bobby"

29 Jeffrey Hart: *The Triumph of Modernism: The Art World, 1985-2005* by Hilton Kramer

30 David Gordon: *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the 20th Century* by Robert Kagan

32 Tom Piatak: *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11* by Dinesh D'Souza

[WAR]

FACING FACTS

The Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group suffered the same failings as most bipartisan commissions—a tendency toward caution, a split-the-difference mentality. But its conclusions are nonetheless important: acknowledgement that the situation is “grave and deteriorating”; recognition that Iran and Syria have an interest in a stable Iraq and should be engaged; understanding of the centrality of Israel-Palestine to any Mideast diplomacy. That consensus is significant: a major part of the American establishment now admits that there will be no victory in Iraq.

As *TAC* goes to press, the report has just been released, but Washington’s war hawks are already emitting a bracing shriek. *National Review* preemptively called it “one for the wastebaskets” and argued, “The U.S. needs to fight more in Iraq, not give up.”

This reluctance to stare failure in the face is psychologically understandable. Losers at the gaming table seldom know when to cut their losses. Policymakers realized Vietnam was lost as early as 1966, but that didn’t stop them recycling a million more American boys through the jungles, at epic human cost. That tendency is still very much alive.

President Bush promises to “take every proposal seriously,” but he also told Fox News, “I am the commander in chief. I make decisions based upon what I think is best to achieve our objectives.” Moreover, having apparently learned that “realism” is a buzz word around Washington, he has begun randomly inserting it into his sentences, a tic that might be comical if it didn’t signal the persistence of his “stay the course” petulance.

Still the tide of mainstream opinion has turned. Sen. Chuck Hagel, originally a war supporter, wrote a tough *Washington Post* op-ed pointing out that Iraq



is not a prize to be won or lost by American arms. The vacuum created by the invasion will be filled—not by us, but the region’s own powers. What America has already spent in blood and treasure amounts to a devastating loss. But the U.S. can still extricate itself, if not with honor at least with the cold realism that is the hallmark of all great powers, and remain free to pursue its foreign policy in a more responsible way.

[JUSTICE]

ENGINEER NO MORE

One sign that Justices Roberts and Alito have brought some moderation to the Supreme Court came in arguments over the long debated question of “racial balance” in the schools. More than a half-century has passed since the Court ruled in *Brown v. Board* that skin color could not be a factor in school assignment. In the eyes of some, this was supposed to lead to equality in educational achievement between the races.

While that gap, extremely wide in the days of segregation, has narrowed considerably, it has certainly not vanished, and a cottage industry has developed to lament and ponder that fact. Meanwhile, racial balance in the schools has proved elusive—in great part because most people don’t live in racially balanced neighborhoods and prefer to send their kids to nearby schools.

Forced busing was for a long time the remedy for this—though few besides social-engineering judges were enthusiastic. The theory that white kids’ presence was required to raise the black

level—Thomas Sowell memorably dubbed it “the white child’s burden”—was rightfully considered insulting by many blacks.

Now parents in Louisville and Seattle have brought suit against their districts’ elaborate integration schemes that seek to distribute children to achieve that elusive racial balance.

Noteworthy in the Court’s questioning was that the justices didn’t pose as education experts seeking to produce equal results between all ethnic groups, but rather behaved as constitutionalists. Justices Alito and Kennedy wanted to know, quite properly, whether assigning students to school by race violated the Constitution’s equal protection clause.

This is the correct approach. America is an ethnically complicated place, far more so than it was in 1954. Its best protection against becoming a cauldron of squabbling ethnicities, a New World variant of the Austro-Hungarian empire, is to treat people as individuals, not as members of favored or disfavored groups to be moved around a social chessboard.

[CITIES]

SILENT NIGHT

It’s a conservative maxim that things tend to get worse, and in many realms—morals, civility, foreign policy—the rule is holding. One exception revealed itself in the wake of the shooting by New York City police officers late last month.

The facts have been widely reported: undercover cops fired a fusillade of bullets into three black men who, contrary

to what police believed, were unarmed. One was killed—on his wedding day. Whatever the investigation reveals about why the cops believed themselves in mortal danger and whether their actions violated standard procedures, aspects of the aftermath stand out.

Striking was what didn't happen. The city didn't erupt into riots or experience a spike of revenge assaults. Almost everyone in the public eye understood that the shooting was a tragic mistake. In a city with 350,000 arrests a year, a few will go badly. Sometimes cops get killed, and sometimes people who did not deserve to get shot die.

But if accidents are inevitable, the fact that the city didn't convulse with racial tension was not. It is a blessing, and one of the most striking instances of social progress in the past generation. In 1990, there were 212,000 violent crimes in the city, including 2,605 murders. In 2005, those numbers fell to 86,000 and 874. A drop of this magnitude not only generates a better climate but also marginalizes the hucksters who make their livings exploiting racial tension. More broadly, it signifies that tangible social progress is possible—it happened in America's greatest city, one that only 15 years ago was overlooking the abyss.

[CULTURE]

HAPPY WINTER SOLSTICE

Chicago takes Christmas pageants seriously. Re-enacting the famous scene in which Mary and Joseph were turned away by the Bethlehem Holiday Inn, city officials have sent the Holy Family packing once again. Organizers of a downtown Christmas festival were told that ads for "The Nativity Story," a new film chronicling the Christ child's birth might offend non-Christians. (What these thin-skinned pagans are doing at a Christmas festival is their own business, though they should be forewarned that it's called Christkindmarkt.)

The city promised to clutter Daley Plaza with a variety of religious displays so that everyone could feel comfortably disoriented. "Covens of Wicca also might invade the plaza wanting to practice their magical powers by stirring boiling pots of eels and frogs," quipped a *Chicago Times* op-ed. "Or we might have to step around unsightly piles of dead chickens left scattered about by careless adherents of the Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye." Just as long as Christians keep their distance.

The mayor's office told complainants that their intent was to "keep blatant commercial messages" away, not to shield Chicagoans from dangerous crèches—but odds are that local mall Santas won't be rounded up and sent the way of Christmas' eponym.

[DIVERSITY]

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS, OH MY!

New York health inspectors have confiscated 65 percent more meat this year than in 2005—and it's not suspect hamburger. They're raking in such delicacies as armadillo, iguana, even gorilla. By September, the state's Division of Food Safety and Inspection had shuttered 72 shops for selling illegal meat.

Liberals love pointing to ethnic restaurants as evidence of multiculturalism's bounty, but few line up for bullfrog and chimpanzee, and most probably have strong feelings about salmonella and botulinum.

Much as the variety appeals to our sense of the exotic—if less to our palates—Third-World immigrants bring their health and hygiene habits along with their cuisines, and consumers could learn the hard way. Inspectors designated the mystery meat discovered in one West African grocery store "smoked rodent," but they didn't learn that from the owner. He doesn't speak English. ■

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Historians & Ideologues

In its Dec. 3 edition, the *Washington Post* invited four historians to debate the question: Is George W. Bush the worst president in American history?

Yes, he's the worst ever, concluded Eric Foner. But reading his attack on President Bush, one wonders if Professor Foner has not rather proven he is one of the worst historians in American history.

"Only one president bears comparison to Bush" as the worst, writes Foner, "James K. Polk."

What is Foner talking about?

Some historians rank Polk as great, most as near-great. For Polk secured all of Texas, won a declaration of war after Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and ambushed U.S. soldiers, took the Southwest and California from Mexico for \$15 million, settled the Oregon Territory dispute with the British in America's favor, and went home to Tennessee after one term. Who did more in four years?

Polk almost doubled the size of the United States. The cost in war dead and wounded was 17,000, one-seventh the U.S. losses in Wilson's War, out of which we got ingratitude, uncollectible debts and a vindictive Versailles Treaty that spawned Adolf Hitler.

"Harding and Coolidge are best remembered for the corruption of their years in office and for channeling money and favors to big business," asserts Foner, who lists them among the worst presidents. Now that may be how they're remembered by Foner and his colleagues up at Columbia, but the record shows otherwise.

When Wilson left office and Harding took over in 1921, unemployment was 12%. When Harding died in 1923, unemployment was down to 3%.

During the Roaring Twenties, U.S. manufacturing grew by 64%. By 1929, America was producing 42% of all the world's manufactured goods. From 1922-27, GDP grew 7% a year. Harding and Coolidge cut Wilson's wartime tax rate of 73% all the way back to 25%. The tax burden on the middle class fell by 8%; on the rich it doubled.

Compare that to FDR who, five years into his New Deal, was still grappling with 17% unemployment.

Harding released Eugene V. Debs from prison, whom Wilson had put away as an antiwar agitator. In 1922, Harding completed the greatest arms-reduction treaty in history, the Washington Naval Agreement, dramatically cutting the battle fleets of the great naval powers.

Was there corruption in Harding's administration? Sure, but Harry Truman was run out of office for corruption and folks call him near-great. And Truman got us bogged down in a no-win war in Korea and showed a softness toward Communist subversion matched only by FDR, who was so busy locking up loyal citizens of Japanese descent in detention camps he overlooked the traitors and Stalinist spies in his own official family.

Bush, charges Foner, "has sought to strip people accused of crimes of rights that date as far back as the Magna Carta in Anglo-American jurisprudence: trial by impartial jury, access to lawyers and knowledge of evidence against them."

But the Patriot Act was passed by a 99-1 vote, and when Bush's exercise of his war powers was challenged by the Supreme Court, Bush went back to

Congress and was given the requisite authority.

And what has Bush done to rival Lincoln, Foner's hero, who suspended habeas corpus, locked up 15,000 civilians without trial, sent Union troops to disrupt Maryland's election, and ordered the Chief Justice arrested after he denounced Lincoln's usurpation of power?

Foner's contempt for certain U.S. presidents seems to tell us more about him than it does about them.

Who is Eric Foner? He is, writes Ronald Radosh in a review, "a bona fide red-diaper baby" whose "father lost his job teaching history at the City College of New York after a state legislative committee held hearings about the influence of Communists in higher education."

According to Radosh, Foner's father, at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact, was parroting the party line that Britain and FDR, not the Nazis, were the real enemy.

Foner was a student of Richard Hofstadter, whom he admired greatly, as Hofstadter "hate[d] capitalism" and "espoused an intellectual framework that was framed by Marxism."

Foner, adds Radosh, is an exponent of "radical history," which is the "euphemism of choice for Marxist and neo-Marxist historians who seek to overturn the old mainstream political history." He regards Foner as a "ranting left-wing polemicist."

There is certainly nothing in Foner's selection of our worst presidents to contradict it. And when one learns that Foner is a past president of both the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, one begins to understand why so many kids come out of college thinking America's scoundrels were America's heroes. ■

[mistrusting the joneses]

Fragmented Future

Multiculturalism doesn't make vibrant communities but defensive ones.

By Steve Sailer

In the presence of [ethnic] diversity, we hunker down. We act like turtles. The effect of diversity is worse than had been imagined. And it's not just that we don't trust people who are not like us. In diverse communities, we don't trust people who do look like us.

—Harvard professor Robert D. Putnam

IT WAS ONE of the more irony-laden incidents in the history of celebrity social scientists. While in Sweden to receive a \$50,000 academic prize as political science professor of the year, Harvard's Robert D. Putnam, a former Carter administration official who made his reputation writing about the decline of social trust in America in his best-seller *Bowling Alone*, confessed to *Financial Times* columnist John Lloyd that his latest research discovery—that ethnic diversity decreases trust and cooperation in communities—was so explosive that for the last half decade he hadn't dared announce it “until he could develop proposals to compensate for the negative effects of diversity, saying it ‘would have been irresponsible to publish without that.’”

In a column headlined “Harvard study paints bleak picture of ethnic diversity,” Lloyd summarized the results of the largest study ever of “civic engagement,” a survey of 26,200 people in 40 American communities:

When the data were adjusted for class, income and other factors, they showed that the more people of different races lived in the same community, the greater the loss of trust. ‘They don’t trust the local mayor, they don’t trust the local paper, they don’t trust other people and they don’t trust institutions,’ said Prof Putnam. ‘The only thing there’s more of is protest marches and TV watching.’

Lloyd noted, “Prof Putnam found trust was lowest in Los Angeles, ‘the most diverse human habitation in human history.’”

As if to prove his own point that diversity creates minefields of mistrust, Putnam later protested to the *Harvard Crimson* that the *Financial Times* essay left him feeling betrayed, calling it “by two degrees of magnitude, the worst experience I have ever had with the media.” To Putnam’s horror, hundreds of “racists and anti-immigrant activists” sent him e-mails congratulating him for finally coming clean about his findings.

Lloyd stoutly stood by his reporting, and Putnam couldn’t cite any mistakes of fact, just a failure to accentuate the positive. It was “almost criminal,” Putnam grumbled, that Lloyd had not sufficiently emphasized the spin that he had spent five years concocting. Yet considering the quality of Putnam’s talking

points that Lloyd did pass on, perhaps the journalist was being merciful in not giving the professor more rope with which to hang himself. For example, Putnam’s line—“What we shouldn’t do is to say that they [immigrants] should be more like us. We should construct a new us”—sounds like a weak parody of Bertolt Brecht’s parody of Communist propaganda after the failed 1953 uprising against the East German puppet regime: “Would it not be easier ... for the government to dissolve the people and elect another?”

Before Putnam hid his study away, his research had appeared on March 1, 2001 in a *Los Angeles Times* article entitled “Love Thy Neighbor? Not in L.A.” Reporter Peter Y. Hong recounted, “Those who live in more homogeneous places, such as New Hampshire, Montana or Lewiston, Maine, do more with friends and are more involved in community affairs or politics than residents of more cosmopolitan areas, the study said.”

Putnam’s discovery is hardly shocking to anyone who has tried to organize a civic betterment project in a multi-ethnic neighborhood. My wife and I lived for 12 years in Chicago’s Uptown district, which claims to be the most diverse two square miles in America, with about 100 different languages being spoken. She helped launch a neighborhood drive to repair the dilapidated playlot across the street. To get Mayor

Daley's administration to chip in, we needed to raise matching funds and sign up volunteer laborers.

This kind of Robert D. Putnam-endorsed good citizenship proved difficult in Uptown, however, precisely because of its remarkable diversity. The most obvious stumbling block was that it's hard to talk neighbors into donating money or time if they don't speak the same language as you. Then there's the fundamental difficulty of making multiculturalism work—namely, multiple cultures. Getting Koreans, Russians, Mexicans, Nigerians, and Assyrians (Christian Iraqis) to agree on how to landscape a park is harder than fostering consensus among people who all grew up with the same mental picture of what a park should look like. For example, Russian women like to sunbathe. But most of the immigrant ladies from more southerly countries stick to the shade, since their cultures discriminate in favor of fairer-skinned women. So do you plant a lot of shade trees or not?

The high crime rate didn't help either. The affluent South Vietnamese merchants from the nearby Little Saigon district showed scant enthusiasm for sending their small children to play in a park that would also be used by large black kids from the local public-housing project.

Exotic inter-immigrant hatreds also got in the way. The Eritreans and Ethiopians are both slender, elegant-looking brown people with thin Arab noses, who appear identical to undiscerning American eyes. But their compatriots in the Horn of Africa were fighting a vicious war.

Finally, most of the immigrants, with the possible exception of the Eritreans, came from countries where only a chump would trust neighbors he wasn't related to, much less count on the government for an even break. If the South Vietnamese, for example, had been less

clannish and more ready to sacrifice for the national good in 1964-75, they wouldn't be so proficient at running family-owned restaurants on Argyle Street today. But they might still have their own country.

In the end, boring old middle-class, English-speaking, native-born Americans (mostly white, but with some black-white couples) did the bulk of the work. When the ordeal of organizing was over, everybody seemed to give up on trying to bring Uptown together for civic improvement for the rest of the decade.

The importance of co-operativeness has fallen in and out of intellectual fashion over the centuries. An early advocate of the role of cohesion in history's cycles was the 14th-century Arab statesman and scholar Ibn Khaldun, who documented that North African dynasties typically began as desert tribes poor in everything but what he termed *asabiya* or social solidarity. Their willingness to sacrifice for each other made them formidable in battle. But once they conquered a civilized state along the coast, the inevitable growth in inequality began to sap their *asabiya*, until after several generations their growing fractiousness allowed another cohesive clan to emerge from the desert and overthrow them.

Recently, Princeton biologist Peter Turchin has extended Ibn Khaldun's analysis in a disquieting direction, pointing out that nothing generates *asabiya* like having a common enemy. Turchin notes that powerful states arise mostly on ethnic frontiers, where conflicts with very different peoples persuade co-ethnics to overcome their minor differences and all hang together, or assuredly they would all hang separately. Thus the German heartland remained divided up among numerous squabbling principalities until 1870. Meanwhile, powerful German kingdoms emerged on Prussia's border with the Balts and Slavs and Austria's border with the Slavs and Magyars.

Similarly, the 13 American colonies came together by fighting first the French and Indians, then the British. In this century, two world wars helped forge from the heavy immigration of 1890 to 1924 what Putnam calls the "long civic generation" that reached its peak in the 1940s and '50s.

Half a millennium after Ibn Khaldun, Alexis de Tocqueville famously attributed much of America's success to its "forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. ... Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America."

The transformation of economics into a technical rather than empirical field discouraged hard thinking about co-operation. It was much simpler to create mathematical models based on the assumption that rational individual self-interest drove human behavior, even though that perspective could hardly explain such vast events as the First World War, that abattoir of *asabiya*.

In the 1990s, the importance of civil society was widely talked up as crucial in transitioning post-Soviet states away from totalitarianism, but the free-market economists' prescription of "shock therapy" prevailed disastrously in Russia, as gangsters looted the nations' assets.

An important contribution to the scholarly revival came in Francis Fukuyama's 1995 book *Trust: The Social Virtues & the Creation of Prosperity*. Fukuyama raised the hot-potato issue that Americans, Northwestern Europeans, and Japanese tend to work together well to create huge corporations, while the companies of other advanced countries, such as Italy and Taiwan, can seldom grow beyond family firms. (As Luigi Barzini remarked

in *The Italians*, only a fool would be a minority shareholder in Sicily, so nobody is one.) Fukuyama prudently ignored, though, the large swaths of the world that are low both in trust and technology, such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

As an economics major and libertarian fellow-traveler in the late 1970s, I assumed that individualism made America great. But a couple of trips south of the border raised questions. Venturing onto a Buenos Aires freeway in 1978, I discovered a carnival of rugged individualists. Back home in Los Angeles, everybody drove between the lane-markers painted on the pavement, but only about one in three Argentines followed that custom. Another third straddled the stripes, apparently convinced that the idiots driving between the lines were unleashing vehicular chaos. And the final third ignored the *maricón* lanes altogether and drove wherever they wanted.

The next year, I was sitting on an Aca-pulco beach with some college friends, trying to shoo away peddlers. When we tried to brush off one especially persistent drug dealer by claiming we had no cash, he whipped out his credit-card machine, which was impressively enterprising for the 1970s. That set me thinking about why we Americans were luxuriating on the Mexicans' beach instead of vice-versa. Clearly, the individual entrepreneurs pestering us were at least as hardworking and ambitious as we were. Mexico's economic shortcoming had to be its corrupt and feckless large organizations. Mexicans didn't seem to team up well beyond family-scale.

In America, you don't need to belong to a family-based mafia for protection because the state will enforce your contracts with some degree of equality before the law. In Mexico, though, as former *New York Times* correspondent Alan Riding wrote in his 1984 bestseller

Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans, "Public life could be defined as the abuse of power to achieve wealth and the abuse of wealth to achieve power." Anyone outside the extended family is assumed to have predatory intentions, which explains the famous warmth and solidarity of Mexican families. "Mexicans need few friends," Riding observed, "because they have many relatives."

Mexico is a notoriously low-trust culture and a notoriously unequal one. The great traveler Alexander von Humboldt observed two centuries ago, in words that are arguably still true, "Mexico is the country of inequality. Perhaps nowhere in the world is there a more horrendous distribution of wealth, civilization, cultivation of land, and population." Jorge G.

Castañeda, Vicente Fox's first foreign minister, noted the ethnic substratum of Mexico's disparities in 1995:

The business or intellectual elites of the nation tend to be white (there are still exceptions, but they are becoming more scarce with the years). ... By the 1980s, Mexico was once again a country of three nations: the *criollo* minority of elites and the upper-middle class, living in style and affluence; the huge, poor, *mestizo* majority; and the utterly destitute minority of what in colonial times was called the Republic of Indians...

Castañeda pointed out, "These divisions partly explain why Mexico is as

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violent and unruly, as surprising and unfathomable as it has always prided itself on being. ... The pervasiveness of the violence was obfuscated for years by the fact that much of it was generally directed by the state and the elites against society and the masses, not the other way around. The current rash of violence by society against the state and elites is ... simply a retargeting."

These deep-rooted Mexican attitudes largely account for why, in Putnam's "Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey," Los Angeles ended up looking a lot like it did in the Oscar-winning movie "Crash." I once asked a Hollywood agent why there are so many brother acts among filmmakers these days, such as the Coens, Wachowskis, Farrellys, and Wayans. "Who else can you trust?" he shrugged.

But what primarily drove down L.A.'s rating in Putnam's 130-question survey were the high levels of distrust displayed by Hispanics. While no more than 12 percent of L.A.'s whites said they trusted other races "only a little or not at all," 37 percent of L.A.'s Latinos distrusted whites. And whites were the most reliable in Hispanic eyes. Forty percent of Latinos doubted Asians, 43 percent distrusted other Hispanics, and 54 percent were anxious about blacks.

Some of this white-Hispanic difference stems merely from Latinos' failure to tell politically correct lies to the researchers about how much they trust other races. Yet the L.A. survey results also reflect a very real and deleterious lack of co-operativeness and social capital among Latinos. As columnist Gregory Rodriguez stated in the *L.A. Times*: "In Los Angeles, home to more Mexicans than any other city in the U.S., there is not one ethnic Mexican hospital, college, cemetery, or broad-based charity."

Since they seldom self-organize beyond the extended family, Los Angeles's millions of Mexican-Americans

make strangely little contribution to local civic and artistic life. L.A. is awash in underemployed creative talent who occupy their abundant spare time putting on plays, constructing spectacular haunted houses each Halloween, and otherwise trying to attract Jerry Bruckheimer's attention. Yet there is little overlap between the enormous entertainment industry and the huge Mexican-American community.

In late October, I pored over the 64-page Sunday Calendar section of the *L.A. Times*, which listed a thousand or more upcoming cultural events. I found just seven that were clearly organized by Latinos. While it's a journalistic cliché to describe Mexican-American neighborhoods as "vibrant," they aren't.

Some of this lack of social capital is class-related—Miami indeed has a vibrant Hispanic culture, but it's anomalous because it attracts Latin America's affluent and educated. In contrast, Los Angeles is a representative harbinger of America's future because it imports peasants and laborers.

It's often assumed that low-trust societies can be fixed just by everyone deciding to trust each other more. But that can only work if people become not just more trusting but more trustworthy.

Although most Asian-Americans originate in low-trust cultures centered around the family, they typically adapt well to middle-class American life because their high degree of honesty makes them dependable neighbors and co-workers. Hispanics in America, in contrast, have a relatively high crime rate—while their imprisonment rate is less than half that of blacks, it is 2.9 times worse than that of whites and 13 times that of Asians. Alarming, the Latino crime rate goes up after the immigrant generation, suggesting a troubling future. While many American-born Hispanics assimilate into the middle class,

others descend into the gang-ridden underclass. Further, the illegitimacy rate has reached 48 percent among Hispanics (versus 25 percent among whites), and it's higher among Mexican-Americans born here than among newcomers from Mexico.

The problems caused by diversity can be partly ameliorated, but the handful of techniques that actually work generally appall liberal intellectuals, so we hear about them only when they come under attack.

Putnam points out one success story but draws an unsophisticated lesson: "I think we can do a lot to push change along more rapidly ... There was a lot of racial tension around the time of the Vietnam War. Now, polls show that US military personnel have many more friendships across ethnic lines than civilians. ... If officers were told they wouldn't make colonel if they were seen to discriminate, they changed."

Imposing martial law on the rest of America might prove impractical, however. And negative sanctions can hardly account fully for the growth of positive relationships within the military.

One important aspect that Putnam ignores is the military's relentless use of IQ tests. From 1992-2004, the military accepted almost no applicants for enlistment who scored below the 30th percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. This eliminated within the ranks the majority of the IQ gap that causes so much discord in civilian America. Contra John Kerry, enlistees of all races averaged above the national mean in IQ: white recruits scored 107, Hispanics 103, and blacks 102.

Another untold story is the beneficial effect on race relations of the growth of Christian fundamentalism. Among soldiers and college football players, for instance, co-operation between the races is up due to an increased emphasis on a common tran-

sracial identity as Christians. According to military correspondent Robert D. Kaplan of *The Atlantic*, “The rise of Christian evangelicalism had helped stop the indiscipline of the Vietnam-era Army.” And that has helped build bridges among the races. Military sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler wrote in *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*, “Perhaps the most vivid example of the ‘blackening’ of enlisted culture is seen in religion. Black Pentecostal congregations ... have also begun to influence the style of worship in mainstream Protestant services in post chapels. ... Sunday worship in the Army finds both the congregation and the spirit of the service racially integrated.”

Similarly, it's now common to see college football coaches leading their teams in prayer. Fisher DeBerry, the outstanding coach of the Air Force Academy, who has led players with no hope of making the NFL to a record of 169-108-1, hung a banner in the locker room bearing the Fellowship of Christian Athletes' Competitor's Creed, which begins, “I am a Christian first and last.” When the administration found out, he was asked to take it down.

Because policymakers almost certainly won't do what it would take to alleviate the harms caused by diversity—indeed, they won't even talk honestly about what would have to be done—it's crazy to exacerbate the problem through more mass immigration. As the issue of co-operation becomes ever more pressing, the quality of intellectual discourse on the topic declines—as Putnam's self-censorship revealed—precisely because of a lack of trust due to the mounting political power of “the diverse” to punish frank discussion. ■

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Osirak Redux?

An Israeli strike on Iran would pin the U.S. down in Iraq and resuscitate the neocons.

By Leon Hadar

IN THE AFTERMATH of the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, pundits recalled another doomed Pentagon chief, Robert McNamara. After all, both were high-profile secretaries of defense who presided over controversial wars and were replaced by pragmatic figures as those wars began to appear unwinnable.

But another historical analogy is more applicable to George W. Bush's decision to retire Rumsfeld: the firing of Alexander Haig by Ronald Reagan in 1982 against the backdrop of another bloody Middle East crisis, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

At the time, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and National Security Adviser William Clark accused Haig of giving Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon a green light to attack the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon. Haig's replacement, George Shultz, whom Israel's supporters suspected of having close ties to Saudi Arabia, followed the advice of “Arabists” in the State Department and initiated an Arab-Israeli peace plan. Haig's resignation and his replacement by Shultz were thus perceived as a major blow to Israel's position in Washington. America's earlier policy of punishing Soviet allies in the Middle East by focusing on Israel as a “strategic asset” and treating with benign neglect its creeping annexation of the West Bank and Gaza was replaced by a renewed commitment to co-operate with Saudi Arabia and Jordan to revive the peace process. In addition to pressing the Israelis to stop building Jewish settle-

ments in the occupied territories, Shultz took the historic step of granting recognition to the PLO, thus creating the conditions for the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the ensuing Oslo Accords.

Viewed through the lens of the Haig analogy, Rumsfeld's toppling could be seen as a change in the top national-security apparatus with the potential to transform American policy in the Middle East and adjust our relationship with Israel. More than any other senior administration official, with the exception of Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld embraced the neoconservative agenda of his top aides, with its emphasis on ousting Saddam Hussein as part of a campaign to remake the Middle East in a way that would be more hospitable to Israeli interests.

His successor, Robert Gates, is closely associated with the neocons' nemesis—the administration of George H.W. Bush, in particular with the members of its foreign-policy team, including National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and Secretary of State James Baker. Gates also co-chaired with Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser in the Carter administration, a Council on Foreign Relations task force charged with recommending a U.S. policy for dealing with Iran. It called for direct American engagement with Iran and the use of fewer sticks and more carrots to convince the regime to stop enriching uranium and co-operate with the U.S. to end the insurgency in Iraq. Gates and Brzezinski also recommended discarding regime overthrow as

a policy option and advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state as quickly as possible. They called on Washington to pressure Israel not to take any military action against the Iranian nuclear facilities because such actions would undermine American national interests.

Before joining the Bush administration, Gates was part of the Iraq Study Group chaired by Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. The committee has recommended new strategies for the war in Iraq, including entering into negotiations with Iran and Syria and renewing America's effort to bring about negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as between Israel and Syria. If Shultz and the Reaganites succeeded in breaking down the American taboo on engagement with the PLO, can Gates and the post-Rumsfeld Bushies open the road to direct U.S. negotiations with Iran?

Israel's 1982 operation to decimate the PLO in Lebanon led to American recognition of the Palestinian group, and the U.S. campaign to achieve regime change in Iraq and Iran could end up producing a détente between Washington and Tehran. Such is the irony of history. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon destabilized that country and energized its Shi'ite community in an anti-American and pro-Iranian direction, forcing Washington to rely on the moderate Arab states to repair its position in the Middle East. Likewise, the U.S. ouster of Saddam Hussein helped strengthen the position of Iran and its Shi'ite allies, including those in Baghdad. Since the U.S. doesn't have the military power or political will to achieve regime change in Iran, it recognizes that it now needs to engage Tehran in order to stabilize Iraq and the Middle East.

Indeed, the need to engage Iran along the lines proposed by the Gates-Brzezinski task force and the Baker-Hamilton group has become conventional wisdom among the realists in

Washington, who are in the process of retaking control of U.S. foreign policy from the bankrupt neocons. None of the mainstream realpolitik types think that Washington should tolerate an Iran with nuclear weapons. Instead, they call for using diplomatic power to prevent or at least slow Iran's drive to acquire the bomb.

Bush administration officials insist that they are willing to negotiate directly with Iran, but they are also setting a precondition on such talks—Iranian suspension of uranium enrichment—and threatening to punish Tehran if it refuses to comply. Iran and most UN members contend that it should not be prevented from exercising its right as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium under the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Hence, Moscow and Beijing have rejected American proposals to impose sanctions on Iran, and there are no indications that France, Germany, or Britain will support a U.S. military attack on Iranian nuclear installations.

The Bush administration seems stuck in military and diplomatic deadends. A military strike would be ineffective because it would probably fail to completely destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities and would further alienate America's allies. At the same time, Tehran rejects the Bush administration's prerequisite for direct talks. The Iranian regime certainly has no incentive to accept the terms set by Washington since it recognizes that the Bush administration faces enormous constraints on its ability to punish "rogue states." Moreover, Iran realizes that it has the power to sabotage the stabilization of Iraq and threaten U.S. interests in Lebanon and Israel/Palestine. This seems to return the global superpower and the regional power to square one: the United States and Iran have no choice but to talk directly as part of a give-and-take diplomatic process

that could produce a package deal. Washington would recognize the reality of Iran as a leading power in the Middle East, and Iran would submit to IAEA inspections, help the U.S. stabilize Iraq, and remain neutral if Israel and Palestine begin to negotiate a peace agreement. This is the kind of deal that Washington's neo-realists could help achieve, especially if they can integrate it into a wider Middle East peace plan involving Israel, the Palestinians, and Syria.

But Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert insisted during his recent meeting with President Bush in Washington that the notion of engaging Iran was akin to appeasing Hitler's Germany, and pressing Israel to deal with the Palestinians as a way of winning Arab and Muslim hearts had the makings of another Munich. "We have reached the pivotal moment of truth regarding Iran," Olmert told a group of American Jewish activists in Los Angeles. "Our integrity will remain intact only if we prevent Iran's devious goals, not if we try our best but fail." The Israeli PM said that his government regarded Iran's enrichment experiments as part of a program to develop a nuclear bomb, a development that, he argued, would pose an existential threat to the Jewish state and threaten the core interests of America and the West.

Olmert's view is roughly shared by President Bush, the surviving neocons in the administration, and by leading Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill, including presidential aspirants Hillary Clinton and John McCain. In fact, according to Israel's *Ha'aretz* newspaper, President Bush told French President Jacques Chirac during a recent meeting that the possibility of Israel striking Iran's nuclear installations should not be ruled out and that if such an attack were to take place, he would "understand it." This was not the first time the president has hinted that he

would not veto in advance an Israeli raid on Iran's nuclear centers. When Israel struck Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981, the Reagan administration joined the other members of the UN Security Council in condemning the Israeli action. The "understanding" tone of the comments made by Bush implies that his administration will not follow suit.

Michael Oren, an Israeli historian affiliated with Shalem, a think tank that promotes the Likud agenda, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that Olmert came to Washington "in search of a green light" from Bush to launch a preemptive strike

sible that Bush and Cheney, backed by the remaining neoconservative foot soldiers, are hoping that Israel will soon remake the Osirak '81 production in Iran? Such an Israeli action could serve not only as preemptive action against Iran but also against the battalions of realist forces led by Baker, Hamilton, Gates, and Brzezinski, who threaten what remains of the neocon agenda. Indeed, as Oren put it, the ramifications of an Israeli attack on Iran "are certain to affect America as well." If Israel attacks Iran, and especially if Israeli jets pass through Iraq's American-controlled

recall similar wishful thinking on the eve of the American decision to green-light the Israeli attack on Hezbollah's infrastructure in Lebanon last summer. From the office of the vice president to the Pentagon to AEI and *The Weekly Standard*, officials, wonks, and scribblers fantasized that it was going to be the Six Day War all over again, that Israel would annihilate the Shi'ite militia and Hassan Nasrallah in the same way that it had left the Egyptian military rotting in Sinai and devastated President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1967. This would strike a major blow to Hezbollah's patrons, Syria and Iran, and would shift the balance of power in the Middle East in favor of Israel and its sponsor, the United States, which would then be able to regain the momentum in Iraq. Before we knew it, we would have another tipping point in Mesopotamia.

The Israeli operation in Lebanon did serve as a tipping point—by transforming Hezbollah into the most popular anti-Israeli and anti-American force in the Middle East and by shifting the balance of power in the region even further in the direction of Iran. Now just six months after Israel's fiasco in Lebanon and as the American disaster in Iraq continues to unfold, the usual suspects are once again daydreaming that a lame duck American president will approve military action by a politically drained Israeli prime minister against the leading bad guy in the neoconservative script.

A few days of Israeli bombing may or may not retard the Iranian nuclear program, but it would impede any plan by the realists to engage Iran in an effort to stabilize Iraq, start withdrawing U.S. troops, and change the direction of American policy in the Middle East. ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies and author, most recently, of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.

"THE LIGHT WAS NOT GREEN, BUT NEITHER WAS IT FLASHING RED."

against Iran. According to Oren, Olmert discovered that "bogged down in Iraq and hemorrhaging political capital at home," Bush was unable to undertake a unilateral attack against Iran "or even to endorse an Israeli one." That was "bad news" for the Israeli PM, who had "hoped to secure a hard-and-fast timetable for interdicting Iran's nuclear program first by diplomacy and then, if that failed, by force." Nevertheless, concluded Oren, "the light Mr. Olmert received in Washington was probably not green, but neither was it flashing red."

American officials continue to maintain in public that Washington will not sanction unilateral Israeli action against Iran, and according to the *Jerusalem Post*, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told French officials that she would not be willing "to show understanding for a possible Israeli strike against Iran" in the same way that her boss promised. But the mixed signals coming out of Washington, and the fact that top officials have refrained from stating clearly that they would veto a strike, have led to speculation in Europe that there is some political logic behind what looks like confusion among the Bushies. Is it pos-

airspace, the perception in the Middle East and elsewhere will be that while Israel ostensibly acted alone, "the U.S. acts with it," as Oren explained.

But he argues that only conspiracy theorists would arrive at such a conclusion. Consider, however, that U.S. presidents, including Bush, have repeatedly declared their opposition to any move by the government of Taiwan to declare its formal independence from China, recognizing that such a move could trigger a war that would almost certainly involve the United States. Why then aren't President Bush and his aides announcing that they would not support an Israeli strike on Iran that would almost certainly force the U.S. into another war, further destabilize Iraq, and increase anti-American violence around the globe? One doesn't have to stand on the grassy knoll to speculate that such developments would not only benefit Israel but could also halt the erosion of neoconservatives' power and resuscitate their dream of U.S. military hegemony in the Middle East.

Hopes of an Israeli military action breathe life into the neocon geo-strategic corpse that was buried in Iraq and

Newt's Comeback Tour

Whether the former speaker is planning a White House bid or just seeking to raise his lecture fees, figure that he's got a five-point plan.

By W. James Antle III

THE MOST STRIKING THING about Newt Gingrich is how little he seems to have changed since relinquishing the speaker's gavel eight years ago. His trademark helmet of gray hair has gone white and his suits are a bit more slimming, but his overall appearance and bombastic speaking routine remain much the same. "I want to thank every member of the College Republicans who are here today," Gingrich beams, as students who were still in elementary school during his 1994 "revolution" chant "Newt! Newt! Newt!"

Gingrich retains his fondness for revolutionary rhetoric and grandiose historical analogies. He proceeds to rattle off an itemized catalog of his main points—"the three big principles of where we are now"; two steps toward reforming our campaign-finance laws; the "five basic principles that form the heart of our civilization"—with such alacrity that you have to pay close attention to figure out if he actually makes it to the end of each list. Gingrich at the podium is part policy wonk, part motivational speaker. He sees himself as a successor to Ronald Reagan but may actually be the Right's Tony Robbins.

In the course of a 20-minute speech, Gingrich proposes to "transform litigation, regulation, education, taxation, health, and energy" to give our grandchildren a better tomorrow. His website—newt.org, since we're all on a first-name basis—has sections on "Winning in a Global Economy" and "Promoting Active Healthy Aging." Gingrich's new

book is called *The Art of Transformation*. It isn't the kind of title Robert Taft or Barry Goldwater would have chosen.

Gingrich's gift of gab made for an easy transition from Mr. Speaker to Mr. Speechmaker, reportedly pulling in \$50,000 an address on the lecture circuit. Now he hopes to use his motivational skills to persuade people to do something bigger than attend the next Republican convention—make him leader of the conservative movement again and perhaps even president.

The former speaker is still guarded about whether he actually has designs on the top job. Gingrich huffily told *Fortune*, "I am not 'running' for president. I am seeking to create a movement to win the future by offering a series of solutions so compelling that if the American people say I have to be president, it will happen." Asked about such potential Republican competitors as former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Sen. John McCain, he told the business magazine they are "nice people" who are "not in the same business" as he is: "They're running for president. I'm running to change the country."

When *Fortune's* Washington bureau chief reasonably concluded that these remarks meant the Georgian was "running, only without yet formally saying so," a Gingrich spokesman demurred. "Gingrich has been consistent and clear," the statement said. "He has no plans to run for president and will not even make a consideration about running until later next year." Indeed, he has told reporters

he won't make a determination about the presidential race until September 2007. Nor are these presidential flirtations anything new. Maureen Dowd described the former House speaker as "a chubby little boy" in "a frisky game of hide-and-seek with reporters about his presidential plans"—back in 1995.

But Newt is clearly positioning himself for something. Gingrich made a stir with his recent Kissinger-like proclamation that the Iraq War is a "failure." He recently turned up at a Politics and Eggs breakfast in Ohio and lectured chastened Republican state legislators in New Hampshire after the midterm elections. (The *Concord Monitor's* headline read: "Humble GOP students heed Gingrich.") At the second event, he pointedly defended the Granite State's first-in-the-nation primary status.

Increasingly, Gingrich has demonstrated a willingness to criticize the Bush administration and current Republican leadership. At a fundraiser in Virginia, he called GOP consultants' efforts in the 2006 elections "stupid." *Human Events* quoted him as saying that the last two years of Bush's presidency would be as good as Gerald Ford's at best and perhaps even as bad as Jimmy Carter's.

It takes a big ego to anticipate a spontaneous draft movement will spring up to demand your presidential candidacy. Nothing similar has been undertaken since Ross Perot's independent bid in 1992—and even that was less spontaneous and more organized than the Perot campaign wanted voters to think.

Yet a candidate who believes, as Gingrich wrote in his 1995 book *To Renew America*, that his ideas on public education can create a “Third Wave Information Age learning system that is as different from the current bureaucratic model as the space shuttle is from an 1845 stage coach” is not lacking in confidence.

On its face, a Gingrich presidential bid seems like a nonstarter. When Newt slunk away from Capitol Hill after the GOP came perilously close to losing its majority in 1998, he was a widely disliked public figure. His unfavorable ratings approached 70 percent, and relatively few of the colleagues he had helped lead to power four years prior were sorry to see him go. Democrats campaigning in swing districts gleefully mocked their Republican opponents as Gingrich clones.

Even leaving the House didn’t cause all of Gingrich’s negatives to go away. In 1999, it was disclosed that an affair with a House aide led to the breakup of his second marriage—a stunning contradiction of his party’s family-values message, especially at the same time Republicans were working to impeach Bill Clinton over the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Gingrich married the staffer, but that may not be enough to make him appealing to social conservatives who are worried about the institution of marriage.

Yet Gingrich’s speaking tours and stints on Fox News demonstrate that he still has a dedicated national following. Commenters at his website encourage him to make a White House run, posting “We need you Newt!” and other entreaties. National polls consistently place him third among potential GOP candidates for 2008. Gingrich rarely does better than the high single digits, but conservative aspirants like Mitt Romney or Sam Brownback would be lucky to have those numbers.

The vacuum on the right of the presidential field is Gingrich’s best asset.

Giuliani is pro-choice, supports gun control and gay unions, and has his own troubled marital history. McCain is distrusted by most conservatives on both economic and social issues. But no credible conservative has emerged who has either the popular or financial backing to wrest the lead away from the two frontrunners. Activists running out of options hope that Newt can.

Gingrich also looks good compared to his troubled, less articulate successors. Many conservatives are ready to reclaim the enthusiasm and ideological vigor that suffused the early days of the first Republican Congress in 40 years. And with Republicans now out of

teamed up with Hillary Clinton on health-care initiatives and sounded off on tax rates. Yet there is considerable truth to Bob Dole’s memorable quip: “You hear Gingrich’s staff has these five file cabinets, four big ones and one little tiny one. Number one is ‘Newt’s Ideas.’ Number two, ‘Newt’s Ideas.’ Number three, number four—‘Newt’s Ideas.’ The little one is ‘Newt’s Good Ideas.’”

In the little file sit Gingrich’s complaints about Republicans’ exorbitant federal spending habits and criticisms of bureaucracy, but his four big cabinets of bad ideas are overflowing. Newt’s nostrum for Iraq is to launch another “third stage” campaign. And he advocates trying in

GINGRICH DOESN’T SEEM TO HAVE LOST HIS ENTHUSIASTIC VIEW THAT PAYING POOR SCHOOLCHILDREN TO READ BOOKS CONSTITUTES AN EDUCATION “REVOLUTION.”

power, some GOP activists may be willing to bet that the man who led them out of the wilderness in 1994 could be the right one to do it again. “If you make a mistake,” Gingrich argued in a recent speech, “you need to stop and go to battle against the mistake.”

The Gingrich comeback tour is based on more than nostalgia. It is also a predictable reaction to the intellectual decline of the Republican leadership. Today’s GOP may have both skilled operators and ideological true believers but no one who combines a red-meat message with the former speaker’s penchant for adroit tactical maneuvers. After Dennis Hastert, many conservatives will be open to the appeals of a smooth talker with eccentric ideas.

And ideas are a commodity Gingrich can claim to have in abundance. From his perch at the American Enterprise Institute and as chairman of his own communications and consulting firm, he has staked out detailed positions on a wide variety of policy questions. He has

Tehran what he believes was a “failure” in Baghdad. Domestically, Gingrich doesn’t seem to have lost his enthusiastic view that paying poor schoolchildren to read books and giving them free laptops constitutes an education “revolution.”

Even Newt’s good ideas might need some tweaking. The collapse of Republican fiscal discipline and faltering of the Congress’s reformist spirit all began under Gingrich’s watch. He says remarkably little in his polished speeches that he couldn’t have said in the 1980s, except for replacing references to communism with warnings about radical Islam.

On the lecture circuit, it all sounds deceptively uncomplicated. Gingrich likes to tell crowds, “I think the correct vision of the future is simple as Ronald Reagan taught us—we win, they lose.” He probably already has his five-point victory plan ready. It will be a new plan—but the same old Newt. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Hidden Costs

The Iraq War bill is higher than taxpayers realize—and Congress is still signing checks.

By Ivan Eland

IF TAXPAYERS FUND an annual budget of a federal department with a particular function, shouldn't they wonder why that department needs billions of additional dollars when it is asked to perform the function? Such is the case with the Department of Defense.

Each year, Congress gives the Pentagon by far the world's largest military budget—in fiscal year 2007 a whopping \$447 billion—as large as the combined defense expenditures of the next highest dozen or so nations. Yet in FY 2007, the Bush administration is likely to request an additional \$100-\$128 billion in “emergency” supplemental spending to fight the war on terror. Last fiscal year, the Pentagon requested \$66 billion in emergency funding; in 2005, the request was \$82 billion; and in 2004 and 2003, respectively, the requests were \$72 billion and \$74 billion. The Department of Defense's job is to fight the nation's battles, but when a war actually arises, it seems to need added largesse to carry out its mission.

Many conservatives, who regularly gripe about the federal government's ineffective and inefficient use of taxpayer dollars, give the Pentagon a free ride on its profligate spending habits. And when troops are engaged in combat overseas, the general public is wary of questioning massive military expenditures. That chariness should cease.

The first question any informed taxpayer should ask is how the same emergency can be unanticipated for five consecutive years of budgeting. The Iraq War has now lasted longer than World

War II, and the war on terror has a longer duration than that. During the Korean War, about 77 percent of the expenses were funded through regular Department of Defense appropriations; in Vietnam, about 72 percent. In contrast, at least 70 percent of the cost of the war on terror has been financed by emergency funding.

To military budget bureaucrats and members of Congress and their staffs—always keen to game the system for advantage—the emergency-funding route offers several advantages over the standard appropriations process. The military services provide much less detail in a supplemental request than in a regular application for funding about how they will spend the money. In one recent supplemental request, the Pentagon distributed its rationale to only a few lawmakers, and justification for the funding was not made public, raising suspicions that the Pentagon had something to hide. Of course, fewer details mean less constitutionally mandated congressional oversight and media coverage.

In contrast to the congressional oversight of the executive branch envisioned by the founders, the modern military-industrial complex fosters collusion by the two branches to finance items through the more opaque emergency-funding process that should be funded through the more open regular appropriation procedure.

Even if the average taxpayer agreed that defense expenditures for the five-year war in Afghanistan or the three-

and-a-half-year war in Iraq continue to be unexpected—a dubious concession—some of the things funded in the supplemental bills are only tangentially, if at all, related to fighting the war on terror. On Oct. 25, 2006, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England wrote a memo to the services encouraging them to widen what they consider to be items required to fight the war on terror. This wink and nod apparently accounts for the huge jump in the request for emergency funding from \$66 billion in FY 2006 to a likely \$100-\$128 billion in FY 2007. Congress has also added items to the supplemental request that were not unforeseen, for example, part of the funding for the futuristic but accident-prone V-22 tilt-rotor transport aircraft.

Another reason that Congress likes to fund non-emergency items in supplemental bills is that they do not count toward the congressional budgetary spending limits. If some non-emergency items can be shifted to the supplemental bills, more military spending can be funded in the regular budget while still staying at or under the caps. Thus members of Congress get more pork for their districts, and the military gets more goodies too.

For instance, if the Army can offload some of its peacetime expenditures into the supplemental bills, it has more money for projects like the \$160 billion Future Combat System—a family of robotic tanks only good for countering competent tank armies from a nonexistent competing great power. If the Pentagon would eliminate unnecessary

weapons or those originally designed to fight the defunct Soviet Union, expenses to fight the war on terror could be funded within existing defense budgets.

The Air Force's stealthy F-22 fighter was originally designed to face the next generation of Soviet fighters that was never built. The U.S. Air Force is so superior to any other air force on the planet—even using the F-15—that F-22 production could be truncated. The V-22 aircraft, designed to transport Marines rapidly from ship to shore, is costly and

repair equipment worn down or damaged by the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they are still buying expensive unneeded weapons. To keep defense contractors—and thus members of Congress—happy, the services choose to fund this pork instead of securing vital items for troops in the field. The military bureaucracies then demand more money for combat operations, and Congress gives it to them.

To date, the war on terror has cost more than \$500 billion, is escalating in

In contrast, a rapid withdrawal from the morass and the elimination of costly weapons that have little role in fighting al-Qaeda would allow the U.S. to reduce its defense budget—and the federal deficit—while continuing a robust military effort against that terrorist group. The war against al-Qaeda requires law enforcement, human intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles, and Special Forces troops—all relatively inexpensive—not gold-plated weapons systems that would have been more at home in a bygone era. Also, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded, and data confirm, that the war in Iraq has made the terrorism problem worse. The costs of fighting al-Qaeda could be lowered by reducing the number of radical Islamists motivated to attack the United States in the first place. A rapid withdrawal from Iraq could thus achieve a double bonus in cost reduction—in Iraq itself and in the war against al-Qaeda. ■

SOME ECONOMISTS ESTIMATE THAT WHEN **ALL RELATED EXPENDITURES ARE**
TOTALED UP, IT COULD COST BETWEEN \$1 AND \$2 TRILLION.

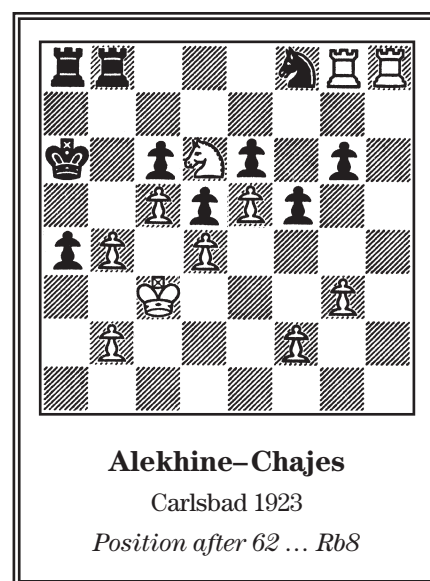
has been plagued with crashes. Helicopters could do the same job for far less cost. The Navy's DDG-1000 destroyer is exorbitantly expensive as a platform to provide land attack capabilities and protective fire for Marine amphibious assaults that may have been rendered obsolete by technology. With the Cold War over and the Russian submarine fleet rusting at the docks, the relatively incapable Chinese submarine fleet does not warrant a new U.S. submarine class to counter it. The U.S. Los Angeles and Seawolf classes are already the best in the world. No other nation has any capable big-deck aircraft carriers. But the United States has an excessively large fleet of 12 such ships, which could be reduced without eroding security by forgoing the building of new vessels for a time. In a war, carrier aircraft can carry far fewer bombs than Air Force planes taking off from longer runways—thus rendering the carrier an expensive and inefficient way to provide firepower.

The services—especially the Army, Marines, and Air Force—claim that they are being strapped by the expenses to operate, maintain, and

expense, and is rapidly surpassing the Vietnam War as the second most costly conflict in American history. The cost of the Iraq War alone now exceeds \$300 billion. Some economists estimate that when all related expenditures are totaled up, it could cost between \$1 and \$2 trillion. Absurd as it may seem now, the Bush administration's official position before the war was that it would cost \$50 million or less. Even Larry Lindsey, the top White House economic adviser, estimated before the war that it would cost \$100-\$200 billion. He was sacked for it.

The U.S. has lost the war in Iraq, and that futile quagmire could cost taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars more—not to mention the more important cost in unnecessary casualties. Even if American forces completely withdraw from Iraq by the end of calendar year 2009, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that U.S. taxpayers would still incur an additional \$166 billion in expenses. In a less optimistic scenario—troop levels would decline less rapidly and remain at 40,000 until 2016—the budget office projects that another \$368 billion would be needed.

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Meet MS 13

The most dangerous gangs in the U.S. are Central American imports.

By Paul Moreland

“NOTHING FURTHER for the government,” muttered the Department of Homeland Security lawyer after an ineffectual cross examination. Miquel had just leapt through the last hoop to immigration salvation. His case had dragged on for more than a year, during which time he bounced between DHS detention facilities until he was finally stashed far enough away to deter visits by family and lawyer but still within a three-hour shackled ride back to Manhattan for court.

This drama played like a thousand others unfolding across the country, and all concerned—Miquel, his naturalized wife, his three American-born children, me, and even the DHS attorney—seemed relieved to be finished. Everybody except the judge:

“I have a few questions for you, sir.”

“Do they wear t-shirts under their uniforms?” he inquired of the DHS agent assigned to minding duties that day.

“They do, Your Honor.”

“Uncuff him and have him remove his shirt.”

“While he’s doing that,” the judge said, turning to the court interpreter, “ask him if he’s got any gang affiliations.”

Miquel understood enough English to get the gist of the request. He paused, shot a resigned glance at the judge, and proceeded to remove his shirt. All of us stared, as though standing before the latest hanging at the Guggenheim. The dominant theme of his tattoos was religious iconography, but within the thicket were four gothic characters: MS 13. His back revealed his past and sealed his future.

During the course of the case, I met Miquel in jailhouse holding pens and courtrooms, and he always wore prison garb. He seemed strangely at ease in jail—most clients are simpering wrecks—but other than that, nothing struck me as unusual. I have met hundreds of Salvadorans over the years, usually the types seen sweating over stoves in modish restaurants or pushing babies of good birth along Central Park West. Miquel was taller and more sturdily built than most—his full name suggested that his ancestors had been on the thrusting end of the Toledo steel—and he produced a letter purporting gainful employment at a construction company.

He also came with a record. Five years earlier, after a brawl in Jackson Heights, he pleaded guilty to assault. While not his first conviction, it was his first felony. A more recent arrest related to a domestic dispute brought his earlier felony to the attention of DHS and landed him in court that day.

Eight years before, a different judge had granted Miquel a green card, an elusive prize made reality by a Clinton-era *de facto* amnesty for the millions of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans who poured north when the U.S. and Soviet Union rolled the iron dice on the Isthmus of Panama in the 1980s. Under the strange calculus of the Immigration and Nationality Act, Miquel’s felony didn’t require mandatory deportation, and his marriage to a U.S. citizen and paternity of three others secured his eligibility for a waiver—something

akin to a pardon whereby past bad deeds in one’s new country are absolved. His burden—to show that deportation would be an extreme hardship on his wife—wasn’t difficult. The institutionalized political brutality that roiled El Salvador through the ’80s had given way to privatized gang warfare. Reviewing the country-condition evidence, the conclusion was inescapable: Miquel’s removal would create a crushing burden on his wife and, though seemingly lost on the judge, American taxpayers who would subsidize Miquel’s children while he foundered in the Salvadoran economy. Then he took off his shirt. MS 13.

Mara Salvatrucha—*mara*, from the Caliche Indian word for fire ant, and *trucha*, a street tough always spoiling for a fight—is a criminal gang that originated in Los Angeles and El Salvador and presently operates a hemispheric network some 40,000 strong. *Newsweek* called it the “fastest-growing, most violent, and least understood of the nation’s street gangs,” and last year FBI Director Robert Muller declared it the top priority of the bureau’s organized-crime investigative unit.

After seeing Miquel’s tattoo, the judge returned him to jail.

He wasn’t the first gang member I’d represented. Over the years there have been Russians and Chinese, even an octogenarian Italian with a record dating back to Hoover. It’s common knowledge that the Chinese gangs divvy up New York’s Chinatowns and that the Russians do the same with Brighton

Beach. To the extent that I heard about the Central American gangs, it was always an "L.A. thing."

No longer. According to the Washington Office on Latin America, these gangs "have extended their sphere of influence beyond their traditional urban areas to some of the most remote corners of Central America." Further, the think tank reports, they are "now active in various parts of the United States including Los Angeles, the Washington, DC metropolitan area, Chicago, Long Island, Houston, Durham, Omaha and Anchorage, as well as throughout urban and rural areas in Mexico and Canada." Their tactics are brutal—decapitation, drive-by shootings, daylight raids on local businesses—and their propagation to the American suburbs is far more insidious than the migration of their Russian or Chinese counterparts. For those earlier gangsters, hitting the streets of New York or D.C. required an epic effort—slipping in on a false visa or spending a month in the container hold of a freighter. Central Americans need only a good pair of shoes and a big bottle of water.

Despite fantastical fences, National Guardsmen, and Minutemen, the U.S. border remains porous and navigable. The weak, lazy, and fearful are perhaps deterred, but these are not qualities generally found in gangsters. In the immigration world, "here today, gone tomorrow" often includes the appendage "and back again tomorrow." A Mexican client recently told me of his annual commutes through the desert to be home for a certain spring festival in his village.

Statistics on Central American gangs and immigrant crime in general are sparse and unrevealing. In New York, criminals of all national stripes operate within an underworld that is as old as Manhattan above 14th Street. Names change, documents circulate, and statistics on exactly how many of these felons

move among us are no more reliable than the guess of a fisherman who, upon taking one net infers the exact size of the vast, swift school below. Only those who get caught become statistics. Those clever or lucky enough to avoid capture never become part of the data.

But the anecdotal evidence is chilling: a Houston woman shot in the face after reporting a gang shooting, a 16-year-old's fingers severed by a machete, a young couple murdered in Herndon, Virginia by a man witnesses identified as having an MS tattoo on his forehead.

The *Washington Post* reports a rise in the number of Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans "applying for asylum on the grounds that their lives are imperiled by gang violence in their home countries." But among my clients, I find at least as much fear of the gangs operating here.

They maintain what Oscar Bonilla of the National Council for Public Security calls a "highly organized and disciplined" structure, and most members evade capture—many of these thugs sharpened their skills fighting their own governments to a standstill. For those who fall into the lap of the DHS, the government's strategy basically amounts to giving them a hearing and then interrupting their enterprises by sending them home briefly.

The 1996 reforms somewhat tightened the proverbial noose around many of what the vast Immigration and Nationality Act refers to as "criminal aliens." Gone are the days of the two-week vacation in the Dominican Republic to return on a green card, that ten-year stint in an upstate prison lost to the INS inspector. So too is the long era of releasing criminal aliens into the population after state and federal sentences. Now longtime permanent residents, some with criminal records dating back to the original "Starsky & Hutch," are routinely hauled before immigration

judges for proceedings seeking to return them from whence they came 40 years ago.

Thus the immigration court at 26 Federal Plaza churns with aliens facing removal on criminal grounds. Smaller, more secluded courts—one in a federal building on the Lower West Side, the other in a converted warehouse in the rusty commercial belt around Newark Airport—do the same, hearing hundreds of criminal removal cases per month. For those unlawfully present, the seemingly basic logic that one who isn't supposed to be here in the first place should be sent home whether or not he committed a crime is lost. Everybody has his day in court, and under those rights the system is faltering.

Meanwhile, the ranks of the transplanted gangs swell with homegrown recruits—the refugees who fled Central American violence a generation ago find their offspring alienated from the dominant culture. "It's a familiar story," Charles Rotramel, director of Youth Advocates told *Texas Monthly*. "Usually their fathers are gone, many of them in prison. The mothers were uninvolved in their lives either because they were working day and night for minimum wage or because they were dealing with their own problems—often drugs and alcohol—or were simply too broken-down to care."

Getting control of the borders would help, but the problem outpaces the resources of our immigration bureaucracy. Not just in L.A. but in Boise and Alexandria, spray-painted tags claim the landscape—SWC, SPPL, LP, MS 13. Even though Americans can't translate them, they increasingly perceive the peril.

So does Miquel. He has begged DHS to remove his tattoos. ■

Paul Moreland is the pen name of an immigration lawyer in New York City.

Selective Amnesia

The pundits who sold the Iraq War change their tune and bury their records.

By Glenn Greenwald

WHEN POLITICAL LEADERS make drastic mistakes, accountability is delivered in the form of elections. That occurred in November when voters removed the party principally responsible for the war in Iraq. But the invasion would not have occurred had Americans not been persuaded of its wisdom and necessity, and leading that charge was a stable of pundits and media analysts who glorified President Bush's policies and disseminated all sorts of false information and baseless assurances.

Yet there seems to be no accountability for these pro-war pundits. On the contrary, they continue to pose as wise, responsible experts and have suffered no lost credibility, prominence, or influence. They have accomplished this feat largely by evading responsibility for their prior opinions, pretending that they were right all along or, in the most extreme cases, denying that they ever supported the war.

Michael Ledeen, a Freedom Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributing editor to *National Review*, chose the boldest option. In response to a *Vanity Fair* article about the swarms of neoconservatives abandoning the administration and the war as both become increasingly unpopular, Ledeen emphatically denied that he backed the invasion in the first place. Writing on *National Review's* blog, The Corner, Ledeen claimed, "I do not feel 'remorseful,' since I had and have no involvement with our Iraq policy. I opposed the military invasion of Iraq before it took place."

It is difficult to overstate the audacity—and the mendacity—of Ledeen's claim. In August 2002, he wrote a scathing article in *National Review* following an appearance by Brent Scowcroft on "Face the Nation," in which the former national security adviser argued against the invasion. Ledeen devoted his entire column to mocking Scowcroft's concerns:

It's always reassuring to hear Brent Scowcroft attack one's cherished convictions; it makes one cherish them all the more. ... So it's good news when Scowcroft comes out against the desperately-needed and long overdue war against Saddam Hussein and the rest of the terror masters.

Declaring that "Saddam is actively supporting al Qaeda, and Abu Nidal, and Hezbollah," Ledeen wrote, "the Palestinian question can only be addressed effectively once the war against Saddam and his ilk has been won." In response to Scowcroft's concern that invading Iraq could "turn the whole region into a caldron and destroy the War on Terror," Ledeen retorted, "One can only hope that we turn the region into a cauldron, and faster, please. If ever there were a region that richly deserved being cauldronized, it is the Middle East today."

On countless occasions, Ledeen called for the invasion to start as soon as possible. In an August 2002 interview with *FrontPage Magazine*, when Jamie Glazov asked when the war should begin, Ledeen answered, "Yesterday."

He appeared on MSNBC's "Hardball" on Aug. 19 to complain again that the war had not started: "I think that if President Bush is to be faulted for anything in this so far, it's that he's taken much too long to get on with it, much too long."

The following month, in the *Wall Street Journal*, Ledeen wrote, "Saddam Hussein is a terrible evil, and President Bush is entirely right in vowing to end his reign of terror. ... If we come to Baghdad, Damascus and Tehran as liberators, we can expect overwhelming popular support. ... [I]t is impossible to imagine that the Iranian people would tolerate tyranny in their own country once freedom had come to Iraq. Syria would follow in short order."

While it is difficult to be more dishonest than Ledeen, it is difficult to be more wrong than Charles Krauthammer. Prior to the invasion, Krauthammer used his various media platforms—his column at the *Washington Post* and his almost daily appearances on Fox News—to warn that Iraq was rapidly building up its WMD capabilities and that the U.S. risked running out of time if it did not invade immediately. He assured Americans that the war would pay for itself with oil revenues and that Iraqis would greet Americans as liberators.

In an Aug. 26, 2002 *Time* column, Krauthammer crystallized the issue at the heart of the Iraq discussion: "The growing debate on invading Iraq hinges on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction." In his *Washington Post* column of Oct. 7, Krauthammer argued,

“Hawks favor war on the grounds that Saddam Hussein is reckless, tyrannical and instinctively aggressive, and that if he comes into possession of nuclear weapons in addition to the weapons of mass destruction he already has, he is likely to use them or share them with terrorists.”

According to Krauthammer, the WMD threat was so imminent that, as he argued on Fox News on Nov. 8, 2002, waiting a matter of months could mean that Saddam obtained nuclear capability: “Under this Resolution, if Blix does not have to report back to the Security Council for 105 days, do the math. That’s the 21st of February. That is a very long time away. And it could be at the end of our window to attack.” In his Nov. 15, *Post* column, Krauthammer rang the alarm yet again: “We’ve been given time, but so has Hussein. Time to hide his weapons. Time even to distribute them through Iraqi agents—aka diplomats using diplomatic pouches—into the heart of the enemy. (We still don’t know where last year’s anthrax came from.) Time to give the stuff to terrorists who, as Osama bin Laden’s tape suggests, are now prepared to make common cause with Hussein.”

Now, as the war he demanded lies in ruins, Krauthammer uses his *Post* column to revise his record: “Our objectives in Iraq were twofold and always simple: Depose Saddam Hussein and replace his murderous regime with a self-sustaining, democratic government.” His hysterical obsession with WMD has been whitewashed from his pundit history, and in its place is a goal that Krauthammer barely mentioned prior to the war.

As recently as Oct. 28, 2005, he mocked foreign-policy realists for their belief that democracy could not take root in Iraqi culture, insisting that “the overwhelming majority of Iraq’s people have repeatedly given every indication

A senior State Department official apparently revealed the identity of a CIA anti-proliferation cover unit to the world’s leading nuclear bandit A.Q. Khan. In 2000, a Turkish delegation consisting of generals and technical experts visited Washington seeking technology for Ankara’s White Energy nuclear program, ostensibly intended to generate electricity. A high-level Foreign Service officer, recently returned from Turkey, escorted the group. While making the rounds of contractors, the Turks met a representative of a consulting company called Brewster-Jennings, the cover company used by Valerie Plame and other CIA officers tracking weapons proliferation. But the State Department contact told the group to stay clear because Brewster-Jennings was “part of the US government,” a euphemism indicating intelligence affiliation. One of the Turks then contacted the Pakistani Embassy in Washington to pass the information on to an ISI intelligence officer. The embassy subsequently telephoned someone in Pakistan who, judging from the conversation, is presumed to have been a member of the Khan group of nuclear proliferators who helped develop North Korea’s weapons and also sought to sell nuclear technology to Iran and Libya.



The United States is spending \$200 billion per year to counter the threat posed by less than 5,000 jihadi-type terrorists and their supporters worldwide. That works out to roughly \$40 million per year, per terrorist. Through this massive effort, seven homegrown terrorists in the early stages of an apparent conspiracy were arrested in Miami, and only a handful of detentions have been made overseas. This is little to show for such an enormous commitment of resources. The global war on terror largely benefits defense contractors and various advocacy groups that seldom serve the national interests of the United States. It is making some Americans very rich and is ensuring that any retired general or senior bureaucrat who wants a remunerative seat on a company board will not be left behind. Meanwhile, the constant iteration of the Islamist threat has supported the terrorist agenda by fostering fear and uncertainty.



In 2001-02 the FBI, acting on a request from the IRS, investigated what appeared to be a massive insurance fraud carried out by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The IRS became suspicious after it noted a number of deaths of elderly individuals who had large insurance policies naming AIPAC as their beneficiary. The policies were mostly issued by two companies, Metlife of Connecticut and a second company in Atlanta. Preliminary investigation suggested that AIPAC was approaching elderly supporters and securing their participation in obtaining high-dollar insurance policies. The companies were chosen because of AIPAC’s ability to influence the policy-issuance process through the co-operation of actuaries and senior-level company officials who were also believed to be AIPAC supporters. These officials were willing to approve the coverage even though no company would normally issue a policy to an 80-year old or to someone in poor health. The investigation eventually concluded without producing any indictment, though it is unclear whether that happened because the evidence was inconclusive or because of the Justice Department’s usual unwillingness to pursue anything having to do with the Israel lobby.

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of valuing their newfound freedom.” But now, Krauthammer claims that the war he urged is failing because Iraqis are incapable of understanding what freedom is about:

[T]he problem here is Iraq’s particular political culture, raped and ruined by 30 years of Hussein’s totalitarianism. ... Is this America’s fault? No. It is a result of Iraq’s first democratic election. ... It was never certain whether the long-oppressed Shiites would have enough sense of nation and sense of compromise to govern rather than rule. The answer is now clear: United in a dominating coalition, they do not.

That the failed war is the Iraqis’ fault has become a leading neoconservative excuse. On Nov. 3, Paul Mirgenoff of the Powerline blog blamed the Iraqis for electing the wrong prime minister—“The Iraqis ... voted in the Shia-militia-friendly Maliki government, thereby making it difficult, if not impossible, for the U.S. to work with the current government to curb sectarian violence.” But in April, Mirgenoff lavished the Iraqis with praise for that very choice, with his “acknowledgement that the selection of Jawad al-Maliki to be Iraq’s prime minister is good news” because Iraqis were “resisting Iranian pressure to back Ibrahim al-Jafari” and thus “stood up for a unified Iraq.”

This is common practice in the world of punditry: most war advocates continue to parade around as foreign-policy experts even though, with the rarest exception—an Andrew Sullivan here or there—virtually none has acknowledged his error.

The dynamic is also evident among former Bush supporters now trying to distance themselves from the unpopular president. Many who loyally supported and even venerated Bush when he was

riding high now pretend to have recognized his flaws all along.

In her Oct. 26, 2006 *Wall Street Journal* column, Peggy Noonan tried to demonstrate how intellectually honest she is by claiming that well-connected Republicans thought the GOP deserved to lose the midterm election. For the party’s woes, she blamed the president: “They want to fire Congress because they can’t fire President Bush.” Trying to explain Republican dissatisfaction, she wrote:

Republican political veterans go easy on ideology, but they’re tough on incompetence. They see Mr. Bush through the eyes of experience and maturity. They hate a lack of care. They see Mr. Bush as careless, and on more than Iraq—careless with old alliances, disrespectful of the opinion of mankind. ‘He never listens,’ an elected official who is a Bush supporter said with a shrug some months ago.

Along the way the president’s men and women confused the necessary and legitimate disciplining of a coalition with weird and excessive attempts to silence Republican critics. They have lived in a closed system. They now want to open it but don’t know how. Listening is a habit; theirs has long been to suppress.

But in early 2004, when arguing for President Bush’s re-election, Noonan employed her trademark effusiveness to glorify the president’s character and pay homage to his humility and great sense of responsibility:

Mr. Bush is the triumph of the seemingly average American man. He’s normal. He thinks in a sort of common-sense way. He speaks the language of business and sports and politics. You know him. He’s

not exotic. But if there’s a fire on the block, he’ll run out and help. He’ll help direct the rig to the right house and count the kids coming out and say, ‘Where’s Sally?’

He’s responsible. He’s not an intellectual. Intellectuals start all the trouble in the world. And then when the fire comes they say, ‘I warned Joe about that furnace.’ And, ‘Does Joe have children?’ And ‘I saw a fire once’ ...

Bush ain’t that guy. Republicans love the guy who ain’t that guy. Americans love the guy who ain’t that guy...

So in just over two years, Bush went from being a diligent Everyman to a know-it-all tyrant who listens to no one, stamps out dissent, and is irresponsible with his duties. Noonan now depicts Bush in this way while pretending that she never oozed praise.

But her reversal isn’t as brazen as the pro-war, pro-Bush pundits who have begun advocating the very views they spent the last three years demonizing. Ever since the U.S. invaded, those who pointed out that we were achieving little more than mass death, destruction of American credibility, conversions of moderate Muslims into extremists, and a serious weakening of our military were vilified as America-hating terrorist allies who wanted us to lose. Those who simply pointed out that the war effort wasn’t going according to promise were derided as cut-and-run “defeatocrats” who lacked the intestinal fortitude to fight.

Yet pundits who equated dissent with treason are now declaring the war to be a failure and are advocating withdrawal without bothering to reconcile their current views with their previous allegations.

New York Post columnist Ralph Peters wrote in November 2005 that a failure to see the mission through to

completion would tell the world that “Americans are cowards who can be attacked with impunity.” He further argued that “a U.S. surrender would turn al Qaeda into an Islamic superpower” and that “[i]f we run away from our enemies overseas, our enemies will make their way to us. Quit Iraq, and far more than 2,000 Americans are going to die.”

But on Nov. 2, 2006, Peters wrote a column in *USA Today* announcing, “Iraq is failing. No honest observer can conclude otherwise. ... If they continue to revel in fratricidal slaughter, we must leave.” The same columnist who warned just a year ago in the most alarmist tone that withdrawal would gravely endanger the U.S., now claims that “Contrary to the prophets of doom, the United States wouldn’t be weakened by our withdrawal, should it come to that.”

All of these self-proclaimed super-patriots who spent the last three years shrieking that anyone who criticizes the war is a friend of the terrorists are now being forced to admit that the war is unwinnable. But rather than acknowledging their reversal, they seek to erase the public record, both to salvage their reputations and to obscure the intensity of their attacks against those who were right. Such vitriol against critics muted debate in the first place and ensured that we stayed in Iraq, pretending all along that things were going great.

There is nothing wrong with acknowledging one’s errors and changing one’s mind. When genuine, this should be encouraged. But these pundits are not doing that. They know that they were on the wrong side of the most vital issue of the last decade, and in trying to reverse their predictions reveal themselves to be deeply flawed not only in judgment but also in character. ■

Glenn Greenwald is author of How Would a Patriot Act? Defending American Values From the Bush Administration.

Good-bye Poodle

Tony Blair staked his career on the Iraq War—and lost.

By Geoffrey Wheatcroft

LONDON—Six years ago, Bill Clinton spent his last days in the White House trying feverishly to establish a legacy for which posterity might remember him without sniggering. Now Tony Blair is also looking for a legacy, in fact the self-same one. In September he told the last Labour Party conference he will address as prime minister, “From now until I leave office I will dedicate myself to advancing peace between Israel and Palestine.”

A detached observer hearing that might have queried Blair’s sanity or at least his contact with reality. Despite the welcome ceasefire at the end of November between Israel and Palestinian groups, the outlook for real permanent settlement of that bitter and intractable conflict is in many ways less propitious now than for a long time past, and even if there were such a resolution, Blair would be about the last man on earth to act as honest broker. Our prime minister does not seem fully to have realized that as a consequence of Iraq, he is despised by Arabs and Muslims. One Beirut newspaper called him, “Washington’s international gofer.”

And yet Blair’s exalted words illustrate some of his salient characteristics. One is his propensity for willing the ends without willing the means. He shares that with another and far greater prime minister, although nothing Churchill did during the Second World War was as grievous a piece of wishful thinking as Iraq. Another is Blair’s love of lofty rhetoric. “I feel the hand of history on our shoulders.” “Let the day-to-day judgments come and go. Be prepared to be judged by history.” “When people look back on this time, I honestly believe they will see this”—the

fall of Baghdad in 2003—“as one of the finest moments of our century.” “The kaleidoscope has been shaken.”—after the Sept. 11 attacks—“The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again.”

A little more than three years ago, when it was already obvious that the Iraq enterprise was not prospering, he said, again to his party conference, “I can only go one way, I’ve not got a reverse gear.” This was a deliberate echo of Margaret Thatcher’s “The lady’s not for turning,”—not her own oratorical finest hour, in my view, but Blair’s soundbite was much more foolish. Most motor vehicles have a reverse gear, which is not so much useful as essential if you find yourself driving the wrong way up a one-way street.

But most salient of all is his chameleon quality, looking this way in one light and that way in another. Throughout his career, Tony Blair’s great gift has been his ability to speak to different audiences. He became leader of the Labour Party but won a landslide election in 1997 by appealing to many middle-of-the-road, middle-class people in conservative Middle England. He was for low taxes and high public spending, he was a European and an Atlanticist, he persuaded Irish republicans that he understood them and Ulster Unionists as well.

Even across the Atlantic, he managed to excite conservative Republicans at one moment and liberal Democrats at another. It was an astonishing performance, and what is remarkable is how long this political conjuror got away with it. As Blair now runs down the clock at Downing Street, that skill may at last have deserted him, or it may have come home to roost.

In September, there was something like a coup mounted against him by Gordon Brown, his Chancellor of the Exchequer and ostensibly his closest colleague, though in reality a man with whom Blair has scarcely been on speaking terms. The coup was carried out with characteristic ineptitude by Brown, but Blair could only calm his turbulent party by saying that he would have resigned the prime ministership within a year. The betting here is that he will go some time between May and July. Some Westminster-watchers reckon that Blair will choose the date that will cause the greatest possible difficulty for Brown.

Although the details of the long-standing enmity between Blair and Brown are too complex and tedious to relate, its origins lie in yet another of Blair's failings, which is his knack of saying something and then forgetting it. If a politician maintains something, let's say insisting that he did not have sexual relations with "that woman," if he persuades his colleagues to agree with him, and if he then suddenly admits that he did after all have an "inappropriate" relationship, then those colleagues are, in the hallowed phrase of Irish politics, left with their arses hanging out the window.

Hard as it is to believe, Blair has an even greater gift than Clinton for selective amnesia. In 1994, he gave Brown to understand—over dinner in a London restaurant called Granita, whose name has entered the topographical dictionary of British politics—that Brown would one day succeed him. No date was fixed, but Brown understandably thought that meant sooner than 13 years.

Then Blair did the same trick with the late Roy Jenkins, over electoral reform; with Paddy Ashdown, then leader of the Liberal Democrats, over a form of coalition; and most grievously with David Trimble, then the leader of the Ulster Unionists. In order to secure Trimble's assent to the Belfast agreement of 1998,

Blair promised that, if IRA violence continued, Sinn Fein would be excluded.

The violence continued, and far from being dropped Sinn Fein were granted even more concessions, and Trimble's career was ended. His party has been swept aside and replaced by Ian Paisley and his much more intransigent Democratic Unionists, an outcome that, regardless of any other rights or wrongs, was not what Blair originally had in mind.

For years that charge of being all things to all men dogged Blair, and even his admirers would ruefully admit that there was truth in it. Then came Iraq, and even some of Blair's detractors said that this charge for once did not apply. Whatever you thought of the war, whether or not you approved Blair's position, this time he had stood up to be counted.

But to the contrary, Iraq was the supreme and most disastrous demonstration of that very propensity on Blair's part. The crucial fact was that he told Parliament publicly something different from what he had told President Bush privately at Crawford when he committed Great Britain to war in April 2002.

For nearly a year afterward, Blair kept up the pretence that he was still "doing everything I can to work for peace," when it was clear even then that he was doing everything he could to work for war. We can now agree that there might have been good reasons for the war, but the reasons that Blair gave could not have been good because they weren't true. As Churchill more than once pointed out in 1939-40, a war that is fought for the wrong reasons when it was not absolutely necessary is morally compromised from the start.

Whatever view is taken of the Iraq enterprise—Talleyrand's "worse than a crime, a mistake" seems the most lenient verdict—Blair does not come out of it well. For a time he may have impressed Americans with his lofty rhetoric: "how-ever tough" it might be, he would fight

alongside the United States with "no grandstanding, no offering implausible and impractical advice from the touch-line. ... We will stay with you to the last."

Looking back, a little well-considered advice—about the need for enough troops to secure Iraq after the military campaign and for a plausible political plan—might not have gone amiss. It was the least Blair could have offered in friendship.

He still wills the ends but not the means, and still talks with a forked tongue. His Labour MPs ardently want a Palestinian state more or less in the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. His American allies—notably the Washington neoconservatives and evangelical voters—just as ardently do not want that. Who is right is neither here nor there; they can't both be.

And everything Blair does in his last month as prime minister will only serve to confirm what Kendall Myers, a senior State Department analyst, said in his lecture in Washington at the end of November entitled "How Special is the United States-United Kingdom Relationship After Iraq?" He observed, as many of us have long since, that Blair staked his career on supporting President Bush's war, and has received absolutely nothing in return: "We typically ignore them and take no notice."

The one real legacy of Blair's prime-ministership may have been to demonstrate that this special relationship was special mainly in that only one side knew it existed. As an Englishman I don't think this has done my country much good, but has it done America much either? ■

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is an English author. His books include The Controversy of Zion, which won a National Jewish Book Award, and The Strange Death of Tory England. Yo, Blair! will be published in February.

Not By Politics Alone

Conservatives must initiate their own long march through the institutions of culture.

By Claes G. Ryn

THAT LEADING POLITICIANS wield great power nobody will deny. What is not so well understood is how limited that power is. Over time, especially, politicians are superceded by forces largely beyond their control. They must yield to those who mold the fundamental ideas and sensibilities of a people, those who affect their hopes and fears, direct their attention, and select and define the issues of the day.

Society's long-term evolution is profoundly affected by those who shape the mind and imagination of a people. They set the tone in the arts, the entertainment industry, the publishing houses, the electronic media, the press, and academia. When these are pulling in the same direction, not even a landslide political victor can overcome them. For real and lasting change to be possible, first the culture has to change.

In the following discussion, American and Western civilization will be described, for brevity's sake, as torn between traditionalists—those who stress humanity's dependence on the achievements of previous generations—and radicals—those who turn their backs on history and want to realize visions bearing no resemblance to actual human experience. That this is a simplified picture of our predicament hardly needs saying. Human beings do not fall into neat categories. Also, traditionalists, for example, could not hope to preserve the ancient heritage that they claim to cherish without restating and developing it in new circumstances. Indeed, at a time of profound dislocation, attempts to preserve and protect

traditional insights and patterns of life may, to those who embrace dominant beliefs and practices, look like radical departures.

The power that may be ultimately decisive in setting society's direction is found in what will strike many as an unlikely place, in the arts and humanities broadly understood: in the arts—from dramatists, novelists, and movie-makers to composers and painters—and in academic disciplines—from philosophy, history, and English to politics and psychology. In these fields, trendsetters have long been chipping away at the moral and spiritual core of what can loosely be called traditional Western civilization. Hence the basic orientation of our society. Putatively conservative political victories here and there have made little difference to the fundamental trends of Western society.

To take up first the role of intellectuals, consider the late 1960s and early '70s when the New Left and the counter-culture attacked not only the military-industrial complex but all traditional civilization. This rebellion could trace its roots at least as far back as Rousseau. These were the radical children of indulgent liberal parents who had already done their part to undermine traditional beliefs by rejecting moral universality and making abstract, "scientistic" rationality the arbiter of truth. The new campus radicalism soon spread into the larger society, partly through sympathetic coverage in the media.

Because the turbulence on the campuses and elsewhere subsided, many wanted to believe that radicalism was

petering out. The opposite was true. The campus radicals and their less radical-looking sympathizers did not disappear. Many of them found permanent, congenial homes in the colleges and universities. They stayed—as faculty. Since their days on the ramparts they have, whether as unreconstructed or somewhat chastened radicals, taught millions of students. They or their students are now senior tenured professors, department chairmen, deans, provosts, and presidents. They sit on curriculum and personnel committees. They select new faculty. They influence the criteria for promotion and tenure. They pass judgment on which books will be published or rejected by university presses, which articles will be published or rejected by academic journals. They have profoundly affected standards of scholarship and truth and even define intelligence. By designing SAT, LSAT, GRE, and other tests, they bias admissions.

People do not inquire deeply into what their children or grandchildren will be taught in college. They are more concerned about the relative prestige of a school. And that ranking, too, is determined by the same trendsetters.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the state of academia is that even those most widely reputed to be the defenders of traditional beliefs are also helping to subvert them. The Straussians, for instance, have long sought to persuade unsuspecting traditionalists that philosophy is incompatible with convention and "the ancestral." To celebrate the American founding, says Harry Jaffa, is to "celebrate revolution." America, he asserts,

is the “greatest attempt at innovation that human history had recorded.”

The professoriate teach all future professors but also all future high-school, secondary, and elementary schoolteachers. Those entering academia are already acclimated because their high-school teachers tend to mimic the professoriate who taught them. In this way alone, professors in the humanities reach deeply into the popular consciousness. The biases of schoolteachers are all the more effectively inculcated because children are exposed to them outside of school as well. Television programs, movies, and music confirm and embellish the ideological and emotional slant that students absorb during the school day.

Of the old campus radicals who did not stay in academia, a large number gravitated toward communications and entertainment. As TV producers, directors, and editors, they decide what is news and how selected stories should be covered. As scriptwriters, they decide what behaviors to admire and detest, what to take seriously and what to dismiss, what to laugh and not to laugh at. As editors at publishing houses, they decide what subjects are of interest and which books deserve to see print. As critics, they decree what is art and what is not. As songwriters, they set society's musical beat.

Not all people in the communications, entertainment, and knowledge industries are drawn from the old campus radicalism, but each year for decades whole armies of new graduates, educated by a largely radical professoriate, have invaded these institutions and society in general. The business world and the professions are no exceptions.

Over time, the professoriate has evolved ideas even more radical than those of the 1960s and '70s. Yet many contend that in the 1980s conservative values finally triumphed in America

when Ronald Reagan won two presidential elections in landslides. Now the ascendant neoconservatives tell Americans that their society is in good shape and getting better. They have assigned to the United States the ambitious task of bestowing its enlightened values on the entire world, starting with the Middle East.

To refute the triumph-of-conservatism thesis does not even require going outside of practical politics and economics. During this era of alleged triumph, the federal government expanded by leaps and bounds, while state and local autonomy contracted. The 10th Amendment is a dead letter. Laws that extend government's control over society continue to pour forth from Washington, and Americans are being asked to become the pliant wards of a national-security superstate. Traditional constitutional restraints are barely operating.

In the six years of the current administration alone, the national debt has doubled and the federal budget has grown by 25 percent. The deficits in the federal budget and in the country's balance of payments are enormous.

And these are merely the political and economic symptoms of larger moral-spiritual, intellectual, and cultural developments. Have those who keep talking about triumph of conservatism no sense of the decline of education at every level, of private and public morality, of family, and of churches? In the movies, on television, in the press, in music, on videos, in novels, and elsewhere, attitudes and behaviors are portrayed as normal or admirable that would have dismayed virtually everyone just a generation or two ago. The institutions of America's national culture tolerate or welcome almost any denigration of traditional civilization. They teach those who resist to make their peace with inevitable change. The indefensible can always be

defended with reference to freedom of expression or tolerance. Those who resent the radical bullying are afraid to speak out because they know the awesome power of the ruling forces to ridicule, intimidate, and retaliate.

Not even the most skilful politicians could reverse this sustained assault on what remains of traditional Western society, because politicians can only marginally change the imaginative and intellectual momentum that fostered the radicalism in the first place. Over time, Washington's power is dwarfed by the power of the elites in the arts, communications, entertainment, and publishing—the industry revolving around the Hollywood-New York axis—and the academic circles with which these elites are closely intertwined—what may be called the Boston-Berkeley axis.

Deep down, each society lives by a predominant vision of human existence: what life is like and what it should be. All of us have deeply rooted intuitions and ideas that together constitute our basic outlook on reality, our notion of its dangers and opportunities. We approach the world from within a particular sensibility that gives existence its pace and coloration. In our most private recesses, we form hopes for what life might one day become for us. We live on and for such more or less realistic visions. Though this inner self varies with the circumstances and personalities of individuals, societies evolve a predominant state of mind and imagination. Individuals are connected by an emotional and intellectual substratum that gives them similar aspirations. Whatever this predominant pattern of sensibility and belief, it sets the direction of social life in general and of public debate and practical politics in particular. Politicians who violate this mindset risk their political lives.

Enormous power lies with those who shape the mind and the imagination and

make others see life through their eyes. Deep in our personalities are the marks left by the imaginative and intellectual masterminds who create the tenor of an age.

Granted, most people are not exposed to high culture and don't even want to be. But highbrow culture eventually reaches them in diluted, filtered-down, lowbrow form. The sensibility of seminal works of art and thought are transmitted into the general consciousness through popular movies and novels, soap operas, and the imagery of advertising.

When artists really capture our imagination, they make us see the world as they do. What they present as contemptible we, too, begin to despise. What they convey as admirable and

hangs out. Many professed conservatives denigrate the humanities primarily because they believe that they have little practical importance, have little to do with "the real world." To turn society right, you need to win more elections. They have difficulty understanding why purported political victories are repeatedly nullified, though the values and beliefs of the American people continue to slide in a radical direction.

The greater the conservative neglect of the arts and humanities, the greater the grip of the anti-traditional forces. Conservatives have excused their inattention by telling themselves that the radical dominance of the humanities does not really matter in the long run. Who cares about flaky professors, writers, composers, poets, and artists? What

While the so-called Right worried about so-called practical matters, the Left took control of activities that could help refashion society's imagination. The Left understood the power of directing the mind. Those who wished to dismantle traditional civilization thought and acted strategically and reaped extraordinary advantages. Having managed to dominate the artistic and intellectual life of Western society, they have had little difficulty keeping supposedly conservative political forces on the defensive, even when the latter ostensibly controlled the government. The countercultural forces have kept the Western world at war with itself.

Many conservatives seem to believe that artists and intellectuals are naturally and almost inevitably on the Left. If that were so, all efforts to renew traditional civilization would be condemned to failure. But there is nothing inevitable about the radical dominance of the mind and the imagination; these trends since the Enlightenment are in some respects an historical aberration. The radical mindset was created over many years by committed people. People of equal commitment and creativity could dismantle it over many years by unmasking and replacing it with a deeper, more realistic view of life. Radicalism advanced first and foremost by means of a march through the culture. A renewal of American and Western traditions, if one is still possible, could be effected only by another march through the culture. Such a development would require a surge of inspiration springing not from the political and economic periphery but from the moral-spiritual depths. ■

D.H. LAWRENCE WROTE, "WE LIVE BY WHAT WE THRILL TO."

intriguing we want to emulate. D.H. Lawrence wrote, "we live by what we thrill to." Those who enter deeply into our imaginations make us "thrill" to certain goals, make us want to realize them. They help shape our innermost values and our perception of reality.

Contemporary Western society exhibits deep tensions between what remains of traditional civilization and the spreading counter-culture, which by now has its own traditions. These are tensions not just among people but within particular persons who harbor incompatible dreams and have neurotically divided minds and imaginations. In a crunch, the anti-traditional elites can play upon and mobilize radical prejudices that have gained a foothold within many a self-described conservative.

Conservative intellectuals and activists often have an open or thinly veiled contempt for the arts and humanities. The disdain is only partly due to their thinking that this is where the Left

matters is politics and economics. These "realists" do not understand that increasingly politicians and businessmen, as well as the general population, resonate with the sentiments of these "flakes." Inattention to and disinterest in the humanities reveal a failure to understand what really makes human beings tick. They are themselves signs of precipitous cultural decline.

Traditional civilization is threatened with extinction because pleasing but destructive illusions have become part of the way in which most people view the world and their own lives. The hold on society of those who created and fed these illusions cannot be broken mainly through practical politics.

What is most needed is a reorientation of mind and imagination. The great illusions of our age must be exposed for what they are so that they will start to lose their appeal. This can be done only through art and thought of a different quality.

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[Bobby]

Summer of Love and Death

By Steve Sailer

OF THE HANDFUL of famous years in which a common spirit of upheaval swept much of the world, 1968 remains the most mysterious. The revolts of 1848 and 1989 were clearly directed against the regimes of the Right and the Left, respectively. But the frenzy of 1968, which caused even the redoubtable Charles de Gaulle to flee secretly from the student demonstrations in Paris and take craven refuge with a French army unit abroad, lacked an obvious theme other than youth.

Making a movie about how the lives of ordinary people in 1968 intersected with one of the year's appalling events is a promising concept, although former leading man Emilio Estevez, the star of the 1984 cult classic "Repo Man," who has been relegated to directing TV shows for the last decade, would not be the auteur who comes first to mind.

His "Bobby" is a sort of "Grand Hotel" meets "Nashville" ensemble drama starring 22 celebrities as the employees and guests of Los Angeles's Ambassador Hotel in the 24 hours before Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's assassination in the hotel kitchen.

"Bobby" is an unintended tribute to the power of dynasty and family connections, both in politics and entertainment. Estevez's father, Martin Sheen—the

family is Spanish and Irish—made his reputation playing RFK in the famous 1974 TV docudrama "The Missiles of October" and later was JFK in the "Kennedy" miniseries. Sheen, who has been arrested over 70 times in leftist protests, also starred as liberal Democratic President Jed Bartlet on "The West Wing" and here plays a wealthy Kennedy supporter.

Estevez persuaded half of Hollywood to work for scale. For example, Sir Anthony Hopkins and Harry Belafonte appear as courtly retired doormen. An unabashedly wrinkled Sharon Stone plays an aging beautician who can't stand fixing the hair of the drunken Judy Garland-style chanteuse (a somewhat overmatched Demi Moore) performing in the hotel's Coconut Grove nightclub. Paul Rodriguez is a Latino busboy assigned a double shift by his racist boss (Christian Slater), making him miss the Dodger baseball game that night when Don Drysdale pitched his record sixth straight shutout. (Among 1968's many historical oddities, it was the Year of the Pitcher.)

When "Bobby," in which RFK appears only in archival news footage looking like the world's most handsome chipmunk, finally works its way around to the murder—with Rodriguez re-enacting Bill Eppridge's famous *Life* magazine photo of the busboy cradling the dying senator—even a lifelong Republican like me, who as a nine-year old spent the morning after scanning the L.A. radio dial for a station that would finally report the really interesting news that Drysdale had broken the record—was dabbing away a tear.

Unfortunately, outside the busboy story, Estevez's plotlines are less historically grounded and less inspired. Estevez almost ignores Kennedy's opponent in that day's California primary, the

equally antiwar Eugene McCarthy, whom many liberals found purer of heart because Kennedy had only jumped in the race opportunistically after McCarthy had knocked President Lyndon Johnson out with his upstart showing in the New Hampshire primary.

Nor does Estevez mention that the assassin Sirhan Sirhan, a Christian Palestinian immigrant from Jerusalem, committed the first act of Arab terrorism on American soil, shooting the pro-Israel Kennedy on the first anniversary of Israel's surprise attack on Egypt that began the Six Day War.

Estevez isn't a terrible screenwriter or director, but he's not talented or self-disciplined enough to do both. Estevez's flaw as a director is that he is too impressed with himself as a screenwriter. Where another director would wisely underplay corny speeches about how RFK's campaign has given America hope once again, Estevez underscores them with bad swelling music.

"Bobby" isn't anything special as a screenplay, but high-school drama teachers should find it highly serviceable as a class play. It sincerely preaches the uplifting liberalism *de rigueur* in the schools today. Every student of every ethnicity gets his own mini-monologue about Important Issues, and the kids will enjoy dressing up in puerile 1968 fashions. (To see how rapidly America's sense of style deteriorated during the 1960s, compare the tacky costumes in "Bobby" to the snazzy suits and dresses in the Leonardo DiCaprio film "Catch Me If You Can" set just a few years earlier.)

If studio publicists are looking for quotes from me to slap on the DVD case for "Bobby," I can certainly oblige with "Adequate!" and "Not uninvolved!" ■

Rated R for bad language.

BOOKS

[*The Triumph of Modernism: The Art World, 1985-2005*, Hilton Kramer, Ivan R. Dee, 368 pages]

Abstract Thinkers

By Jeffrey Hart

HILTON KRAMER begins this splendid collection of his essays on modern art with a consideration of Vasily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian entitled "Kandinsky and the Birth of Abstraction." He gives a useful account of the spiritual impulses and marginal esoteric thinkers that proved catalysts for Kandinsky, Mondrian, and other modernists—abstraction evolved its own logic—but he does not offer a definition of what abstraction in painting actually is, even though abstract painting still baffles a great many people.

From the Renaissance through the 19th century, painting represented the visible world with portraits, landscapes, the city, and other subjects. Such traditional painting employed color, mass, and line. Eliminate representation from painting color, mass, and line—*Voilà!* you have abstraction. Abstract painting thus achieved a spiritual liberation, freedom from the material-visible world of the 19th century and enabled artists to express states of mind and spirit, including enjoyment of beauty in purity of form.

In Kandinsky and Mondrian, during the first two decades of the 20th century, this spiritual quest sought support in the esoteric thought of such marginal figures as Madame Blavatsky, Rudolph Steiner, and Amy Besant. As Kandinsky wrote in *On the Spiritual in Art*:

The whole nightmare of the materialist attitude, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil pur-

poseless game is not yet over. The awakening soul is still deeply under the influence of the nightmare.

Piet Mondrian's flat rectangular plains of primary colors held together with straight black lines express the achievement of a pure absolute and consequent liberation from our world of contingency and uncertainty.

Not incidentally, one thinks here of Yeats and his own revolt against 19th-century materialism, seeking the occult though ouija boards, séances, and other forms of the esoteric. As one of his Dublin friends remarked, "Willie believes in every supernatural being except God." Indeed Yeats, like the great modernist artists, threw whatever was at hand into his fight against the 19th century. We might add that T.S. Eliot, who had several times experienced transcendental moments of eternal reality, was able to use French symbolist poets and Dante in his own successful effort to "make it new," as Ezra Pound exhorted the artists of his time.

In *The Age of the Avant-Garde* (1972), Hilton Kramer began with a famous essay of the same title that placed modernism in a wide social context as a criticism of the middle class generated from within the middle class. (That essay had

erated by its position between upper and lower classes. It is also important to note that *avant-garde*, a military term pertaining to warfare, also lacks an English counterpart, which suggests much about the impacted and virtually immovable resistance of the French middle class to imaginative change.

As Kramer shows, abstraction—modernism in painting—triumphed during the first two decades of the 20th century. He does not explore the fact—it would have been inappropriate to the occasional nature of many of these essays—that the triumph of modernism was part of a much wider movement in culture. The rebellion against the 19th century began during its closing decades. For a very fine discussion of this in France, I recommend the opening chapter of Roger Shattuck's *The Banquet Years* (1958). We have the Eiffel Tower (1889), denounced by traditionalists as a *pis-soir*; the modernist Exhibition of the Independents (1886); Verlaine, LaForgue, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé focused around 1885; Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps" (1913), its Parisian audiences rioting in protest against its aesthetic modernism.

What we see in England before the First World War was the proliferation of various movements and magazines representing the impulse to "make it new." Imagism emerged in 1912 with Hilda

ABSTRACT PAINTING ACHIEVED A **SPIRITUAL LIBERATION**, FREEDOM FROM THE MATERIAL-VISIBLE WORLD AND ENABLED ARTISTS TO **EXPRESS STATES OF MIND AND SPIRIT**, INCLUDING ENJOYMENT OF BEAUTY IN **PURITY OF FORM**.

appeared earlier in *Commentary* as "The Myth of the Avant-Garde.") Such self-criticism is a remarkable cultural and political phenomenon, suggesting great vitality, though many members of the middle class often did not welcome the achievement, the unwelcomers becoming merely the detested *bourgeois*, a term of contempt in French that does not have an English equivalent. No doubt this middle-class achievement owes much to the creative tension gen-

Doolittle ("H.D."), Pound, and T.E. Hulme. In 1915, at Pound's insistence, Harriet Munroe published T.S. Eliot's LaForgue "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," even though she did not at all understand it.

Throughout *The Age of the Avant-Garde* and now in *The Triumph of Modernism*, Kramer is luminously intelligent when he discusses the great modernists Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Chagall, Leger, and Miro. He

also analyzes the Abstract Expressionists of the post-World War II New York School, such as Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and the younger artist Helen Frankenthaler, making necessary discriminations and locating the New York School correctly as a distinctively American and sympathetic response to European modernism.

In this collection as well as in *The Age of the Avant-Garde*, Kramer returns to the problematic figure of Jackson Pollock, disentangling his actual achievement from his heroic myth and concluding that his vast drip-and-pour canvasses, energetic though they seem, constitute an art that "is maddeningly repetitious in its formal rhythms. It is paltry in its command of color, for classic Pollock is largely based on light-dark contrasts rather than chromatic structure. Classic Pollock also lacks breadth ... in its range of feeling and invention." He concludes that Pollock-as-a-force-of-nature is a major myth but a minor achievement and a triumph of celebrity.

Kramer goes on to make the valuable point that whereas the European modernists had to win their way against established and stubborn traditionalism, America was modern from the beginning:

In Europe the avant-garde mind saw itself as the coefficient of a modernity which society at large had not yet achieved. In America, however, modernity of the sort that the European avant-garde envisioned for its future—skyscraper architecture, high-speed locomotion, assembly-line production, electrified advertising, and similar feats of technological invention—was already commonplace.

As Gertrude Stein remarked in an essay on Picasso, America is the oldest country in the world because it is the first modern country. It is within that context that Kramer discusses such eccentric and quintessentially modernist Americans as Marsden Hartley and Edward Hopper, as well as the mod-

ernists around Alfred Stieglitz. I think it possible that Kramer underrates Hopper, whose work I find powerfully evokes a distinctively American kind of loneliness.

Certainly, with Meyer Schapiro and Clement Greenberg, Kramer is among the foremost art critics of our time. His assessment of Greenberg and handsome tribute to his work comes in a very fine essay on the appearance of the first two volumes in Greenberg's posthumous four-volume *Collected Essays and Criticism*.

His title, *The Triumph of Modernism*, requires interpretation. The triumph of the great modernists was one of skill, heroic spirituality, integrity, and purpose. I remarked earlier that the title essay of *The Age of the Avant-Garde* had previously been published as "The Myth of the Avant-Garde." That myth holds that because genuine modernism was often mocked and rejected, it follows that art that is mocked and found unacceptable is to be respected as advanced modernist art. But just because audiences rioted at Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps" doesn't mean that the latest outrage is also valid as art.

Kramer's critical energy in disposing of the fashionable and bogus often reminds me of F.R. Leavis's "pursuit of true judgment," a serious responsibility of the critic. Richard Serra and Jasper Johns fail the test of seriousness. Hilton Kramer accurately senses nihilism in Andy Warhol's Campbell's soup cans and Marilyn; in the banal photography and grotesque sadomasochism of Robert Mapplethorpe; and in the parodic postmodern architecture of the modish Philip Johnson, his buildings a campy joke at the expense of his clients. The wide acceptance as art of productions by such charlatans constitutes a fifth book of *The Dunciad* and exemplifies the triumph not of modernism but of the myth of the avant-garde. ■

Jeffrey Hart is a senior editor of National Review and author, most recently, of The Making of the American Conservative Mind.

[*Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the 20th Century*, Robert Kagan, Alfred A. Knopf, 527 pages]

Myth-Making for a New Empire

By David Gordon

ROBERT KAGAN has attempted an impossible task, and, predictably, he fails. In *Dangerous Nation*, a history of American foreign policy from the colonial period to the onset of the Spanish-American War, he argues that the standard account of American diplomatic history is grievously in error. America did not, Kagan contends, break sharply in the 20th century from a fixed policy of nonintervention in European power politics. Quite the contrary, American policy has always been actively interventionist. "The pervasive myth of America as isolationist ... rests on a misunderstanding of America's foreign policies in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries."

How can Kagan say this? Until the 20th century, America carefully avoided involvement in European wars, just as the "myth" suggests. Conflicts with European nations, such as the quasi-war with France in the 1790s and the War of 1812, came about only in response to interference with America's rights as a neutral power, and in the 19th century, America avoided involvement in all European conflicts. America's policy was clear and straightforward: the U.S. shunned the constant struggle for mastery in Europe but, to a lesser extent, claimed dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Washington's Farewell Address, Jefferson's First Inaugural, and Monroe's 1823 Message to Congress enunciated this policy. If Kagan wishes to deny that American foreign policy was ever in this sense isolationist, he must erase the clear historical record.

Kagan does his best to do exactly that. He gives a lengthy account of American expansion across the continent. In support of the constant hunger of Americans for land, he shows, the United States government was often quite willing to challenge the powers of Europe forcibly. He complains that diplomatic historians have wrongly separated this saga of expansion from their accounts of foreign policy. These historians classify expansion as a domestic affair, and by doing so they can claim that American foreign policy was isolationist. But they pass over the fact that the domestic expansion involved conflicts with foreign powers. If they took account of this, they would have to abandon their thesis of American isolation.

Here Kagan ignores the point at issue. The "isolationist" thesis is that America deliberately avoided entanglement in European power politics. No one contends that the makers of American foreign policy embraced pacifism in all circumstances. Americans were no doubt quite willing to fight for control of the American continent, but this has little to do with the standard picture that Kagan

"the fate of republicanism in Europe directly affected the safety of republican principles at home, and that the United States, in turn, could and should be an important source of encouragement to liberals and republicans on the European continent."

To show that American policymakers favored liberal regimes over conservative monarchies does not in the slightest throw into doubt the isolationist thesis. That view, once more, is that America did not get involved in European power politics. It is not at all a consequence of this view that Americans could not sympathize with particular causes or countries in European conflicts. Isolation does not demand that one be neutral in "thought, word, and deed." Rather, it requires that a non-European nation not directly involve itself in a European war. Kagan makes a great deal, for example, of American sympathy for Greek independence. But he fails to show that America did anything significant to oppose the Ottoman Empire.

Kagan's failure to distinguish sympathy from intervention sometimes leads him to distort the historical record. He

ster's remarks were his private opinion and disclaimed any intention to interfere in Austrian internal affairs. Kagan tells readers nothing of this. Instead he discusses a proposal by Abraham Lincoln, then a relatively obscure ex-congressman, to take action against Russia.

Our author has a peculiar way of handling historical evidence. In his Farewell Address, George Washington said, "Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships and enmities."

Kagan responds to this classic defense of noninterventionism by denying that Washington's statement expressed a permanent policy. Rather, he had in mind the immediate need to maintain impartiality toward France and enmity toward Britain. This is certainly an application of Washington's conviction, but Kagan offers no evidence against reading the address as the statement of general principles it professes to be.

Thomas Jefferson confirmed and extended Washington's view of foreign affairs in his First Inaugural, supporting "peace, commerce, and friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." Readers who guess that Kagan will dismiss this too as an affair of the moment are in for a surprise. He does not mention the First Inaugural at all.

If Washington and Jefferson leave our author unfazed, the Monroe Doctrine is for him mere child's play. In his message to Congress on Dec. 2, 1823, James Monroe stated: "Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the quarrels which have so agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers ..." Kagan acknowledges that Monroe said this, but he stresses instead Monroe's sympathy for Greek

THE "ISOLATIONIST" THESIS IS THAT **AMERICA DELIBERATELY AVOIDED ENTANGLEMENT IN EUROPEAN POWER POLITICS**. NO ONE CONTENDS THAT THE MAKERS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY **EMBRACED PACIFISM**.

professes to challenge. Kagan embeds the isolationist thesis within the larger and implausible claim that America has in all cases followed a passive course of action. He triumphantly refutes that claim and acts as if he has lain to rest the authoritative account of American isolation.

This is by no means Kagan's sole instance of conceptual confusion. He maintains, with good reason, that American foreign policy has not been dominated by calculations of strict self-interest. In contrast to the realist view that nations always seek to maximize power, Kagan argues that ideas have often determined American policy. For instance, James Monroe believed that

rightly notes that Americans condemned Russia's brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1849 and enthusiastically received the Hungarian revolutionary leader Louis Kossuth on his visit to the United States in 1851-52. But America was never as close to intervening against Russia to protect Hungarian rebels as Kagan uses these events to suggest. Quite the contrary, Secretary of State Daniel Webster made clear to Kossuth that regardless of his personal sympathy for the Hungarians, America could do nothing to aid them. When the Austrian government protested Webster's favorable remarks about Kossuth, the State Department responded that Web-

independence and Spanish liberalism. "His [Monroe's] message was not a declaration of hemispheric isolationism. In important respects, it was a statement of international republican solidarity." Again, Kagan misses the point. Monroe did not propose to go beyond his expression of sympathy. He renounced any policy of forcible interference in European affairs, and that made all the difference. Prince Metternich might well consider America "dangerous," but this was not because he expected armed American intervention in Europe. Rather, he feared that the American example would inspire European rebels who wished to overturn monarchism. Metternich's secretary, Friedrich von Gentz, by contrast, thought that the American Revolution differed fundamentally from the destructive French Revolution. Kagan omits mention of Gentz's famous essay on the subject.

Kagan portrays America as governed by a revolutionary imperative but, in the period his book covers, he is able to find only one case of an American ideological

war, and that is not a foreign conflict. The Civil War, as he describes it, is a veritable morality play, pitting the demigod Lincoln against the nefarious South. Lincoln, in his view, carried out a policy foretold by John Quincy Adams in 1819: "A dissolution of the Union for the cause of slavery would be followed by... a war between the two severed portions of the Union. It seems to me that its result might be the extirpation of slavery from this whole continent; and calamitous and desolating as this course of events in its progress must be, so glorious would be its final issue, that, as God shall judge me, I dare not say that it is not to be desired." Kagan, who follows closely the views of Harry Jaffa, admires Lincoln's policy. Had a similar view ever been applied internationally, Kagan would be right in his thesis about American foreign policy. But of course it was not.

Kagan's book presents a paradox. He has read widely in his subject, and he is obviously intelligent. How has he arrived at a conception so manifestly at variance with the facts? The answer is clear. He is a leading neoconservative defender of a foreign policy of worldwide ideological crusades. A collection of essays that he edited with William Kristol, *Present Dangers*, published in 2000, assailed the supposed passivity of the Clinton administration and urged action against various enemies. The disasters of the Iraq War have taught Kagan nothing. In a recent article in *The Weekly Standard*, he and Kristol inform us that if 50,000 more American soldiers are sent to Iraq, Baghdad may yet be secured. Given these views, the project of his book is understandable. He wishes to say to neoconservatism's critics that it follows the best traditions of American history.

We await with interest the promised second volume of Kagan's study. In it, he will no doubt show how Woodrow Wilson, in making the world safe for democracy, exactly obeyed the prescriptions of the Farewell Address. ■

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[*The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11*, Dinesh D'Souza, Doubleday, 352 pages]

MTV Made Them Do It

By Tom Piatak

DINESH D'SOUZA'S *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11* is really three separate books jammed together in one package: a persuasive though hardly original account of the Culture War in America; an engaging rendition of the Left's hostility toward traditional cultures around the world and its attempt to break down the morality undergirding those cultures; and an unconvincing attempt to link the first two books to the third, a defense of the Bush administration's policies in the Middle East. Because of this odd juxtaposition, there is much of interest in D'Souza's book, though its parts are definitely greater than the whole.

D'Souza sees America as profoundly divided by cultural issues, views these issues as being of great importance, and fears that conservatives are losing ground to the Left. "[W]hat has changed in America since the 1960s," he writes, "is the erosion of belief in an external moral order. This is the most important political fact of the past half century." He provides numerous examples of how this changed view of morality has transformed America, from the debasement of popular culture, to the rapid spread of pornography, to the widespread acceptance of what was universally regarded in the past as sexual immorality, to what D'Souza regards as the inevitable result of such changes: the breakdown of the American family.

He is generally a clear-eyed observer of the Culture War, recognizing that this attempt to redefine morality has produced an America perhaps more divided than at any time since the 1850s. He also

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realizes that much of what drives the Left is hatred of traditional morality, especially sexual morality: "If there is a villain in the liberal story, it is traditional morality itself." And, finally, D'Souza recognizes that Middle American consumption of popular culture and acceptance of some of the products of the new morality means that "Liberal values have penetrated the heartland. In this sense liberals are the dominant side in the cultural war." He is even willing to utter a few unpopular truths, including the observation that art actually flourishes more under mild censorship than in an atmosphere of license. (Anyone who doubts this need only compare the movies of 1939 to those of today.)

D'Souza carries this analysis a step further by showing that the Left has made its struggle against traditional morality a global one, engendering hostility toward America in traditional societies around the world where "the family is not a venue for self-expression, it is the basic unit of survival." He chronicles how the Left is active in supporting abortion, no-fault divorce, the legalization of prostitution, and "the elimination of the concept of the husband as the head of the household" throughout the world. These efforts, in which liberals have sometimes succeeded in enlisting the aid of the United States government, have provoked resentment toward America. D'Souza provides many examples of this leftist cultural imperialism, including how American delegates to the UN Conference on Women in Beijing attempted to introduce their sisters to the joys of lesbianism, only to have the Third World delegates forcibly expel them from their sleeping quarters. "[T]he left wants America to be a shining beacon of global depravity," he writes, "a kind of Gomorrah on a Hill."

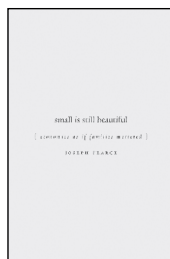
He fails, however, to explain adequately how Third World opposition to "a decadent American culture" led to 9/11, still less why those Americans who share his opposition to this decadent culture should support the Bush administration's Middle East policy. To be sure, D'Souza is right about a number of

things that more conventional defenses of the Bush administration are likely to get wrong: he recognizes that Muslims do not "hate us for our freedom"; that Islamic radicalism is not a form of fascism; that we are not at war with terror; that Abu Ghraib horrified the Muslim world because it involved the sexual humiliation of men, not because it violated treaties that are widely ignored when interrogating prisoners in the Middle East. And he expresses at least some skepticism, though hardly enough, about making the forcible export of

democracy the centerpiece of American foreign policy. Unfortunately, these lapses into common sense and reality do not redeem D'Souza's stubborn, ideological defense of the Bush administration.

"The only way to win the war," D'Souza believes, "is to create a wedge between Islamic radicals and traditional Muslims, and to support traditional Islam against radical Islam." But he does not produce any evidence that Bush's invasion of Iraq, rhetorical belligerence toward Iran and Syria, and dismissive dealings with Palestinian leaders of

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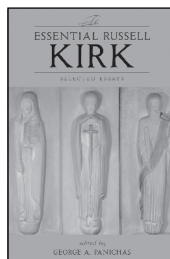
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whom Israel disapproves have endeared the U.S. to traditional Muslims. The reality is quite the opposite.

It is undoubtedly true, as D'Souza argues, that the policies advocated by the cultural Left contribute to Muslim resentment of the United States. But positing such cultural decadence as the explanation for terrorism fails to explain why the Islamists did not target more decadent Europe on 9/11 or why subsequent Islamist attacks in Europe have focused on American allies in Iraq. Nor does D'Souza's exclusive focus on cultural issues explain Muslim hostility toward the Bush administration, which has been sensitive to Islamic religious sensibilities through its pronouncements about the "religion of peace" and more reticent about supporting cultural leftism abroad than was the Clinton

importing with it the immoral ingredients of American values and culture."

As James Burnham pointed out long ago, America's only vital interest in the Middle East is oil, a commodity that whoever holds power there will be compelled by economic reality to sell. Given the enmity that we are engendering by our presence, therefore, the question arises: why stay? D'Souza does not provide a convincing answer or explain how our efforts are doing anything other than radicalizing traditional Muslims.

Nor are many likely to be attracted to his vision of Americans fighting and dying to bring *sharia* to formerly secular states. D'Souza admits that Saddam Hussein "was a secular ruler who kept the mullahs under strict control" and praises Bush for accepting an Iraqi constitution that "gives special place to

own names." Indeed, D'Souza seems to have no sense of filial piety toward the continent that gave birth to Western civilization, viewing its current inhabitants as nothing more than enemies in the Culture War and regarding with apparent equanimity—rather than the dismay of any sensible conservative—the prospect of a Europe dotted with minarets.

D'Souza's Islamophilia also blinds him to the fact that the conflict between Islam and its neighbors originated with Mohammed, not Hollywood. Mohammed began the process of conquest. A Christian West that was far from decadent was the target of Islamic aggression for centuries and survived only because of the valor of Christian warriors in such places as Poitiers, Malta, Lepanto, and Vienna. This Islamic assault on Europe ended only because Turkey was unable to keep pace with European military technology, not because the Ottomans became irenic. In our own age, too, it is only Muslims who react to "a decadent American culture" by resorting to terror. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that no matter what we may have done to make them hate us, tensions on the frontier between the Islamic world and its neighbors are virtually inevitable.

The solution to the problem of radical Islam is not to romanticize Islam, as D'Souza does, by imagining that a shared opposition to such practices as gay marriage can create a genuine community of interest between "traditional Moslems" and Christians for the first time in history. Nor is the answer to invade and democratize the Islamic world, as Bush and the neocons want. Rather, the solution, as Srdja Trifkovic suggests, is to exclude Mecca from America and to disengage America from Mecca, thereby eliminating the greatest threat Islam actually poses—invasion through immigration—and minimizing the tensions and provocations that help Islamic radicalism to spread. ■

Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.

D'SOUZA SEEMS TO HAVE NO SENSE OF FILIAL PIETY TOWARD THE CONTINENT THAT GAVE BIRTH TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION, VIEWING ITS CURRENT INHABITANTS AS NOTHING MORE THAN ENEMIES IN THE CULTURE WAR.

administration. Nor is there any reason to believe that America will be able to convince Muslims inclined to radicalism that it is not immoral. D'Souza chronicles the story of Sayyid Qutb, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who was persuaded of the decadence of the United States by prolonged exposure not to contemporary Hollywood but to middle America of the 1940s, when he was a college student in rural Colorado.

And although D'Souza is quick to dismiss what he terms "isolationism" as "foolish," there is every reason to believe that decreasing the American presence in the Middle East will do more to diminish support for Islamic radicals than his proposed solutions, such as organizing "an international conference on the effects of Hollywood and American popular culture on non-Western cultures." As D'Souza himself admits, "what bin Laden objected to was America staying in the Middle East,

Islam and includes sharia provisions that treat women unequally than men." This displacement of a secular tyrant in Iraq has, among other things, caused up to half the members of Iraq's ancient Christian community to flee the country. D'Souza recognizes that democracy in the Islamic world will lead to the imposition of *sharia*, and he urges his readers to eschew "ethnocentrism" and accept such a result, even when it is brought about through the expenditure of American blood and treasure.

D'Souza's fondness for *sharia* in Iraq is not the only time his pronounced Islamophilia gets the better of him. He takes at face value Islamic claims to be tolerant of Christians and Jews and disparages the cultural achievements of medieval Europe, as compared to those of the Islamic "golden age," going so far as to exalt "the Koran and an elaborate system of written laws and codes" over Americans' medieval European forbears who "could not even write their

Mind Your Manners, Mr. Will



Washington Post columnist George F. Will is appalled by James Webb's rudeness. As some of you may know, the senator-elect from Virginia

was a bit uppity when President Bush asked him at a White House reception for new members of Congress how his boy was. Webb's son, unlike the offspring of most of the rest of our elected officials, is serving with the Marines in Iraq. "I'd like to get them out of Iraq," Webb replied. Bush persisted, "How's your boy?" Webb answered, "That's between me and my boy."

Yes, it sounds rude, but not as rude as sending young men to die in a useless cause. James Webb is not a diplomat—which is why he will be so good to have in the Senate.

More interesting is that this incident caused the urbane Mr. Will to lose his cool and betray his allegiance to style over substance. He wrote, "Webb has conveyed what he is: a boor. Never mind the patent disrespect for the institution of the presidency. Webb's more gross offense was toward another human being. ... He has already become what Washington did not need another of, a subtraction from the city's civility..."

George Will accusing Jim Webb of "admiring his grandeur" is like Paris Hilton calling Laura Bush immodest. The truth is that behind the stern visage, the overt erudition, the air of worldliness, and the condescending tone, George Will is a poseur. When neoconservatism was the flavor of the month, he was a neocon. Now that it has become fashionable to wring one's hands over the mess in Iraq, Will is distraught.

Back in 2002, when the administration struggled to make a coherent case for war, Will stepped in: "The uniquely virulent constellation of four factors—

Hussein's character, the terrorists' proclamation of war against the United States, the various intersections of Iraqi culture with the apparatus of terrorism, and the technologies of mass destruction developed in the last 57 years—constitute a new kind of *casus belli*."

When prudence might have made a difference, he whipped up hysteria: "Some critics say that in order for the president to 'make the case' for proving that the danger is present, its presence must be evidenced by a 'smoking gun.' But that means America cannot act against Iraq until acting is much more dangerous, when Iraq has nuclear weapons."

He accused critics of "moral infantilism" and worse—"Hitler found 'Lord Haw Haw'—William Joyce, who broadcast German propaganda to Britain during the Second World War—in the

Aristocratic manners mean being kind to lesser souls, never affecting superiority, never condescending to those who cannot defend themselves intellectually or physically. Tinseltown always portrays the upper classes as supercilious, snobby, and dismissive of the poor and weak. In fact, it's the other way around.

But back to Jimmy Webb, a man I have never met but take the liberty of calling Jimmy because I've read his books and admire his martial courage. That makes him a far, far better man than those popinjays who piled on when the paternal instinct got the best of him. Yes, it was *lèse majesté* to speak the way he did to the president, but it was well deserved and long overdue.

During the Clinton years I had sworn that if I was ever in the same room with the Draft Dodger, I would speak my mind. Well, two months ago, I ran into Clinton at the London Ritz, of all places. The Bismarcks were giving a lunch for me, and as we crossed the Belle Epoque

GEORGE WILL ACCUSING JIM WEBB OF "ADMIRING HIS GRANDEUR" IS LIKE PARIS HILTON CALLING LAURA BUSH IMMODEST.

dregs of British extremism," he wrote. "But Saddam Hussein finds American collaborators among senior Congressional Democrats."

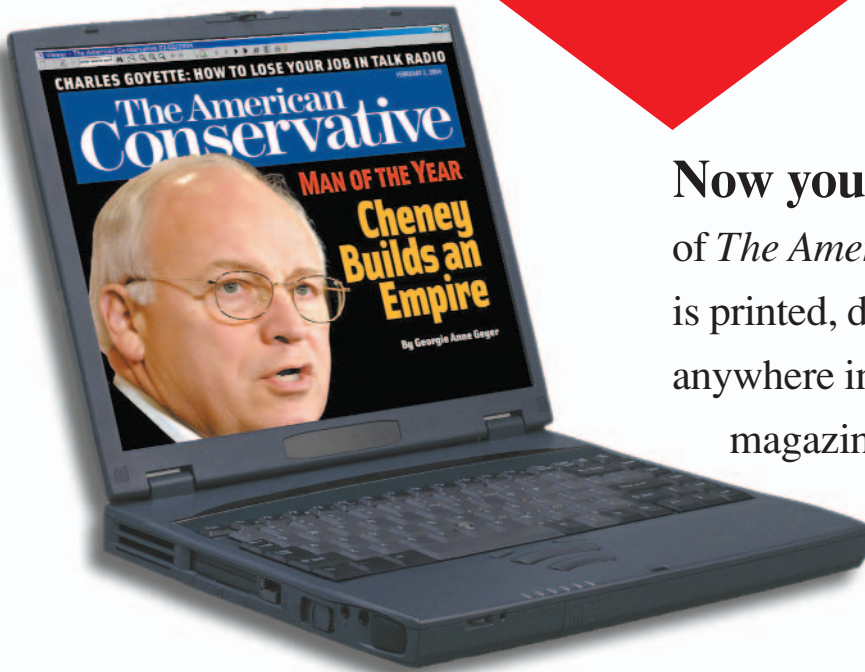
These were reckless and irresponsible charges, particularly coming from a man so appalled by bad manners. But don't expect Will to apologize. Although he has since concluded that rather than rooting out nuclear weapons, "the policy of 'staying the course' means Americans dying to prevent Shi'ites and Sunnis from killing each other," he lacks civility's essential grace.

lobby, there was Clinton, dressed as inappropriately as it's possible to be—wearing a sleeveless windbreaker and the biggest shoes I'd ever seen—and smooching various American tourists. But I said nothing. He is too much of a phony to waste words on.

I kept my dignity and went to lunch with the great grandson of the Iron Chancellor—but then my son is an artist in Rome and is not in harm's way in Iraq.

As the editor of this magazine wrote a couple of issues ago, Go Webb Go! ■

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